# A HOMELAND FOR STRANGERS

## An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia

Peter J. Klassen

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**Revised Edition**

Peter J. Klassen

Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies
Fresno, California

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In addition, it is a special pleasure to thank those whose financial support helped to make this publication possible.

*Summer 1988*

The face of Europe has changed dramatically since this book appeared in 1989. New states have emerged, and boundaries have changed. For the new maps of the Kaliningrad region and Galicia (now part of Ukraine), I am especially grateful to friends who have made important contributions: Gary Nachtigall, who for many years has taught geography at Fresno Pacific University, and his associate Richard Milhorn, accomplished cartographer. Thanks also to Alan Peters, noted genealogist and helpful advisor; Roland Bergthold, Fresno, and Glen Linscheid, Butterfield, Minn., who supplied mountains of important material about Mennonites in Galicia, from early settlement until the tragedies of World War II.

In addition, one of the benefits of expanding one's horizons is the joy of discovering new kindred spirits. I am especially grateful to Bolek Klein and the late Dr. Arkadiusz Rybak, both builders of bridges of understanding between Mennonites and Poles, and to superb guides Alexandra Borodin and Ela Tujakowska, who led us on wonderful journeys of discovery. Also, special thanks to Pani Borodin for translating *Homeland for Strangers* into Polish (Ojczyzna dla Przybyszów).

I also wish to thank Joel Klaassen, skilled printer and patient critic who gave excellent professional advice and printed this volume.

*Fresno, Summer 2011*

# FOREWORD

From Reformation times until the end of World War II—a full four centuries—the Vistula River basin provided a homeland for numerous Mennonite communities. The large majority of these people had their roots in the Low Countries; they had come to seek religious freedom and economic opportunity in the lands along the Vistula.

While fires of persecution still formed part of the landscape in much of Reformation Europe, many regions under the Polish crown offered a large measure of religious toleration. As Poland's main artery of trade, the Vistula provided ready access to numerous ports of trade, including those in the Low Countries. At the same time, many of the fertile lands along the river were still marshlands waiting to be reclaimed. For the Netherlanders, many of whom were Mennonites, this situation provided an opportunity to match technical skill with economic need. It is not surprising that, as civil war and religious persecution swept much of the Low Countries, many Mennonites decided to take advantage of the opportunities presented by a tolerant Polish crown. During the 16th and early 17th centuries, Mennonites settled along the great river, from the delta south to Thorn and beyond.

In the late 18th century, when Prussia gained control of these regions, Mennonite development here continued; however, it soon became apparent that the new regime was more restrictive than the former, more relaxed Polish government. Restrictions were soon placed on acquisition of land; traditional Mennonite practices were challenged. As a result, a number of Mennonites decided to seek opportunities elsewhere. Late in the 18th century, many accepted the invitation of Tsarina Catherine II to settle on the fertile plains of South Russia; others moved to establish new homes in the United States. Throughout these times of change and development, the Mennonite community in what was now a part of Prussia, and later, of Germany, continued to prosper. Large, active congregations flourished here until the end of World War II.

Today, the informed visitor to these regions will find numerous evidences of Mennonite contributions to the fertile lands along the Vistula. This brief introduction is designed to suggest some of the remarkable legacies left from four centuries of Mennonite settlement. The observant visitor to the lush meadows, fertile farmlands and numerous villages will quickly see that, despite political changes and the relocation of former inhabitants of the area, the Mennonite

contribution to the garden of the Vistula continues to shape the life of people living there.

At the same time, it is apparent that many of the persons now living along the Vistula, as well as the descendants of those who originally drained much of this area and otherwise helped to create a prosperous homeland, know little about the remarkable drama enacted here centuries ago. The Dutch Mennonites came as strangers, yet were given a remarkable welcome. Later Polish kings repeatedly confirmed the rights granted the settlers; indeed, monarchs pointed with pride to the economic prosperity created along the Vistula. Along its banks and in other low-lying areas, the marshlands provided new hope and new opportunity. The strangers had found a new home.

It is my hope that the reader will find this brief overview a stimulus to further study and reflection. A more complete monograph, based upon extensive archival sources, is currently under preparation. Some readers may be encouraged to visit contemporary Poland and see the evidences of an earlier Mennonite presence. This slender volume includes photographs of all former Mennonite church buildings still in use, although in many cases no longer serving as houses of worship.

A note about names may be useful. Since World War II, most formerly German names in Poland have been given Polish names or new designations. In most cases, I have retained the names used during the period under discussion. Thus, Danzig becomes Gdańsk in 1945. In some instances, well-established forms of the name, such as Warsaw, are used throughout.

On the banks of the Vistula,
Summer 1988

Addendum to the 1988 *Foreword*

Since the first edition of *Homeland for Strangers* was published, a number of encouraging developments have brought new interest in the study of Mennonites in Poland. The Foreword in the 1988 edition mentioned a forthcoming book on the Mennonite story here, and *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland and Prussia* has been published (Johns Hopkins, 2009). In addition, other recent publications, such as Mark Jantzen's *Mennonite German Soldiers* (2010), an English edition of H. G. Mannhardt's *Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde* (The Danzig Mennonite Church, translated by Victor Doerksen; edited and annotated by Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen, with an epilogue by Tomasz Ropiejko), as well as an impressive array of scholarly articles, have brought greatly enhanced interest in the saga of Mennonites in Poland and in areas that used to be part of Poland.

This renewed interest has been widely shared. In 1988, the formation of the Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association, with an international advisory board, soon to be followed by similar associations in the Netherlands and Germany, helped to bring hundreds of visitors to former Mennonite historical centers in the regions of their earlier homeland. This strong interest in Mennonite life in east-central Europe brought significant personal involvement in—and financial support for—restoration of cemeteries, museum renovation and exhibits, school projects, research projects, and personal friendships. Tours to historical sites have drawn hundreds of participants.

An additional, important benefit of this strong interest has been the building of better understanding of the Mennonite heritage by Poles; they have responded enthusiastically to this interest in their larger history. It is especially gratifying to note that many strong friendships have developed between visitors and Poles now resident in areas once home to many Mennonites. It has been a special pleasure to see persons return to homes that they were forced to leave at the end of World War II and be welcomed by the present occupants. Quite often, the latter had themselves been evicted from homes as the Soviet Union seized part of eastern Poland.

Since the first edition of this book appeared, a remarkable change has occurred In the Vistula Delta. Cities such as Gdańsk, Elbląg and Malbork are now beautifully rebuilt and flourishing commercial, educational and artistic centers;

similarly, towns such as Nowy Dwór, Nowy Staw and Tczew have become prosperous, attractive urban communities.

An attractive, rebuilt museum in Nowy Dwór presents a historical overview of the local Mennonite story, while a few kilometers north of this town a historical park presents a rich variety of former Mennonite life in the region. In addition, the robust village life in the Vistula Delta and beyond reflects the colorful local culture.

It should be noted that, while the original edition was confined to present areas of Poland, this new edition includes regions once part of East Prussia but now the Russian region of Kaliningrad, as well as that part of Galicia, once Polish, now part of Ukraine.

Fresno, 2011

Courtesy Free World Maps

# INTRODUCTION

Throughout many of the centuries of the modern age, the region that is today northern Poland has had a remarkable impact upon European history. Three-fourths of a century ago, the first shots of World War II were fired there. The resulting conflict dramatically altered the political, social and ethnic configuration of this area. It was there, too, that in the 18th century the rival ambitions of great powers led to the dismemberment of a state. Not surprisingly, the resurrection of that state in the 20th century gave new hope and confidence to a people who earlier had often been in the vanguard of the new and the progressive. It was, after all, this land on the southern shores of the Baltic and along the Vistula River that had nourished the spirit of the astronomer Copernicus. It was here, too, that many ideals of liberty and human dignity were shaped on the anvil of economic innovation, political accommodation, diplomatic interaction and social diversity.

It was here, while much of Europe was still ravaged by religious intolerance and while many countries were still burning nonconformists at the stake, that kings and other authorities in Poland chose a different way. Whatever the motivations may have been, early modern Poland permitted religious differences. It is thus not surprising that people who prized religious values left intolerant surroundings to live in freedom under the Polish crown.

Among those who came to the regions along the Vistula to practice their faith and to find new opportunities were numerous settlers from the troubled Low Countries. During the Reformation Era, with its turmoil and change, these lands experienced savage intolerance. Adherents of some of the new movements, such as the Anabaptists—here called the Mennonites—decided to seek a haven along the Baltic and the Vistula. Poland welcomed them.

From the 1530s until the end of World War II, the regions along the Vistula River were home to numerous Mennonite communities. Because of changing political conditions, this area was sometimes under Polish—at other times under Prussian (or German) rule. Throughout the centuries, however, the fertile fields along the Vistula continued to nourish many settlers who had originally come from the Netherlands and several regions of Germany. In the late 18th century, as well as much of the 19th century, descendants often moved on to other countries, such as Russia. Others emigrated to the United States in the 19th

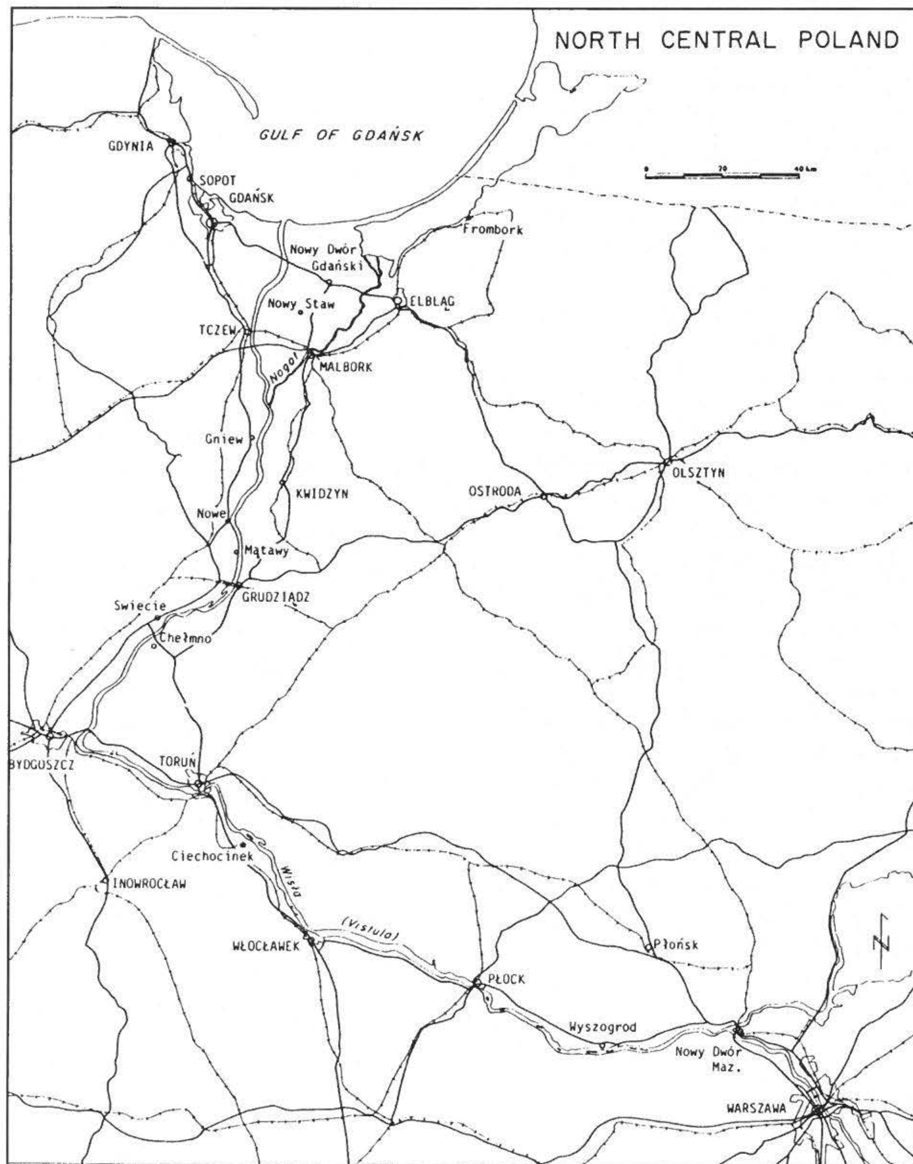
century. Throughout all the changes, however, large congregations continued to flourish and to make the Vistula-Nogata Delta and the lowlands along the Vistula a lush, fertile garden. In the middle of the 17th century, King Władysław IV summarized the sentiments of the Polish government:

> *We are well aware of the manner in which the ancestors of the Mennonite inhabitants of the Marienburg islands (Werder), both large and small, were invited here with the knowledge and by the will of the gracious King Sigismund Augustus, to areas that were barren, swampy and unusable places in those islands. With great effort and at very high cost, they made these lands fertile and productive. They cleared out the brush, and, in order to drain the water from these flooded and marshy lands, they built mills and constructed dams to guard against flooding by the Vistula. Nogat, Haff, Tiege and other streams.*[1]

After the king had recounted the accomplishments of the Mennonite settlers, he reaffirmed "every right, privilege, freedom and custom" granted them by earlier monarchs. Successive rulers reiterated these assurances, so that for more than two centuries, until the partition of Poland among Russia, Austria and Prussia in the latter part of the 18th century, Mennonites lived under the protection of the Polish crown.

At the same time, it must be noted that although Mennonites in most areas along the Vistula enjoyed a remarkable measure of religious toleration, during the 16th and 17th centuries they were often referred to as heretics. Various restrictions by Catholic and Protestant authorities made it clear that Mennonites did not enjoy the same status as did the "official" religions. Thus, in most of this region Mennonites were not permitted to build churches until the latter part of the 18th century. Even then, structural designs were to be distinctly different from state churches and were to resemble regular homes.

Numerous other stipulations demonstrated the subordinate role given the Mennonites. They were forbidden to gain converts from the state churches. Persons who disregarded this prohibition might be fined or subjected to other penalties.[2] Mixed marriages similarly were forbidden, although they often occurred. Not infrequently, persons wishing to be married to those of another faith but choosing to


NORTH CENTRAL POLAND
GULF OF GDAŃSK
GDYNIA
SOPOT
GDAŃSK
Frombork
Nowy Dwór
Gdański
ELBLĄG
Nowy Staw
TCZEW
Nogat
MALBORK
Gniew
KWIDZYN
OSTRODA
OLSZTYN
Nowe
Mątawy
GRUDZIĄDZ
Swiecie
Chełmno
BYDGOSZCZ
TORUŃ
Ciechocinek
Wisła
INOWROCŁAW
(Vistula)
WŁOCŁAWEK
Płońsk
PŁOCK
Wyszogrod
Nowy Dwór
Maz.
WARSZAWA

remain in the Mennonite churches would travel to Holland, be baptized there, then return to their homes.[3] Sometimes authorities tried to have children of mixed marriages baptized In the local Catholic or Lutheran church.[4] The fact that prohibitions of intermarriage were issued repeatedly suggests that they must have been rather ineffective.

Sometimes, government authorities tried to prevent intermarriages by decreeing that marriage of a Mennonite with a non-Mennonite would mean loss of all Mennonite privileges; on other occasions, restrictions on land acquisition were used to try to prevent mixed marriages.[5] Of course, as a report issued in 1692 indicated, if the couple voluntarily joined a Catholic or Lutheran church, their alliance would be readily sanctioned.

It should also be remembered that restrictions varied and often reflected the sentiments of local authorities. Then, with the passage of time, many of the severe limitations were allowed to lapse. As late as the 20th century, however, inhabitants of Elbing were surprised to discover that an old law prohibited the ringing of bells by a Mennonite church. It was quickly rescinded.

# I

# THE EARLY HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**The Hansa and the Teutonic Knights**

Long before Mennonites began settling near the Vistula in the second quarter of the 16th century, the river, as an important artery of trade, had attracted commerce from many trading centers in northern areas of Europe. During the Middle Ages, the Hansa, the north European trading association, established centers of trade on the Baltic coast and along the Vistula River. As a result, traders came from many different countries and often established their own communities in the new homeland. Names such as "Schottland," a suburb of Danzig, or "Preussisch Holland," near Elbing, suggest the origin of the early settlers here.

Then, at the same time that merchants of the Hansa were establishing themselves along the shores of the eastern Baltic, or along some of the important rivers, another powerful force began to make its presence felt in these regions. Early in the 13th century, the Teutonic Knights, originally formed to assist with the reconquest of the Holy Land, shifted their interest to crusading efforts in the Baltic. There, a local duke, Conrad of Mazovia, was finding it difficult to meet the military challenge of a people known as the "Pruzzen," the "Old Prussians." Conrad invited the Teutonic Knights to help him, and so with the blessing of pope and emperor, the Knights moved into the region south of the Baltic.

The Teutonic Knights soon established themselves in the area, and began to build castles and towns, as at Thorn (Toruń), Kulm (Chełmno), Marienburg (Malbork) and elsewhere. Gradually, the Knights established a state that included most of the Baltic coast east of Danzig (Gdańsk) and that stretched south to Thorn.

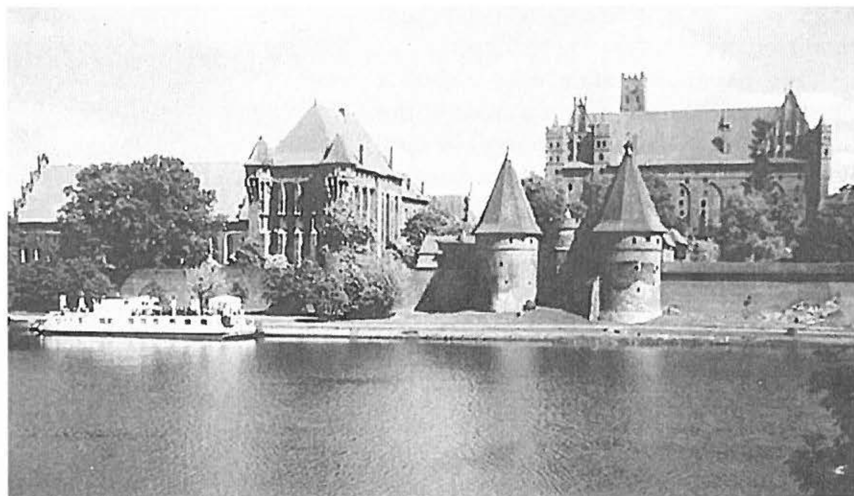
The expanding state soon posed a threat to Polish rule; war resulted. At the battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg) in 1410, Poland and her allies defeated the Knights, but no satisfactory peace resulted. War broke out again in 1454, and this time many of the important cities, such as Danzig, Marienburg and Thorn joined the war against the Knights. By the terms of the Peace of Thorn (1466), the western part of the lands held by the Knights came directly

under the Polish crown, now to be known as Royal Prussia. The eastern part remained under the rule of the Knights, but their Grand Master was forced to become a vassal of the king of Poland. In addition, many of the larger trading centers, such as Danzig, Elbing, and Thorn were rewarded for their support of the king. They were given a large measure of self-government and special privileges, although they recognized the Polish king as their ruler.

### The Reformation in Polish and Prussian Lands

Soon after Luther launched his religious reform efforts, his message reached the shores of the Baltic. Close commercial ties helped to bring Luther's writings to cities such as Danzig; the city soon had numerous champions of the reformation. In addition, in East Prussia, Albert, Grand Master of the Knights, also became a convert to Luther's ideas and in 1525 embraced the new faith. At the same time, he renounced his position as Grand Master, and secularized his lands. As vassal of the King of Poland, he now became Duke of East or Ducal Prussia.

Lutheranism became the faith of most of the German-speaking inhabitants of the important trading centers. Repeated efforts by the King of Poland and the church hierarchy to stop the growth of "heresy" proved futile. Gradually, Poland developed a policy of toleration that allowed most people to practice their faith without fear of oppression. Other Protestant movements also gained a foothold; Calvinism, in particular, won the support of many Polish nobles and of many citizens in the towns. Soon a Calvinist congregation developed in Danzig, in Thorn and elsewhere. In Elbing one of the mayors was a Calvinist. Most of the Protestants, however, were Lutheran. Gradually, cities along the lower Vistula became largely Lutheran, while much of the countryside remained Catholic.



**Malbork (formerly Marienburg) The massive castle, former headquarters of the Teutonic Knights and residence of the Grand Masters from 1308-1457, dominates this city on the Nogat. Built from the 13th to the 15th centuries, it served as the royal residence when the Polish kings visited this part of the realm.**

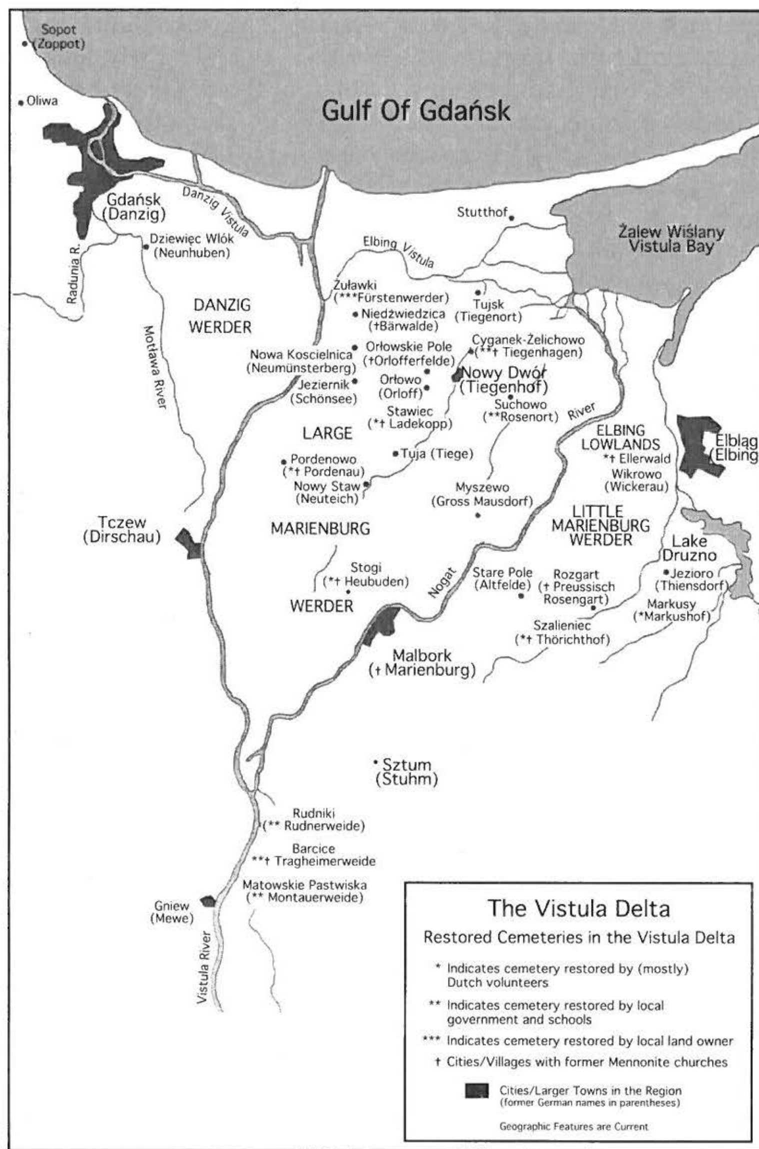
### Early Anabaptist-Mennonite Settlers

When Anabaptists, or Mennonites, began coming to the Vistula-Nogat Delta in

the 1530s, they came to an area that had already felt the first impact of the Reformation and that had begun to adopt a relatively tolerant attitude toward religious dissent. This was in stark contrast to conditions in areas from which the Anabaptists came.

In few parts of Europe was the struggle for religious allegiance so bitter and so bloody as in the Low Countries. First under Emperor Charles V, then under Philip II, Spain determined to keep this area loyal to the traditional faith. When, during the first half of the 16th century, Anabaptism gained many followers here, they were subjected to savage repression. Their story of persecution and suffering has been recorded in the *Martyrs Mirror*. One of their leaders, Menno Simons, a former Catholic priest, joined the movement in 1536. Then, as the Low Countries became involved in a struggle for self-government, an ever more bitter war engulfed the towns and countryside. Not until the latter part of the 16th century did the northern states gain their independence as the United Provinces, soon to be known as the Netherlands.

During the long struggle, many Anabaptists, rejecting the resort to violence but also seeking to find a peaceful existence elsewhere, decided to move to the more tolerant lands along the Baltic. Commonly known as Mennonites, after their Dutch leader Menno Simons, they brought with them their skills as craftsmen, merchants and farmers. It was in the latter category in particular that they found new opportunities for their skills as farmers, who could drain the land and thus reclaim swamps, could be put to good use in the Vistula Delta.



Sopot
(Zoppot)
Oliwa
Gulf Of Gdańsk
Gdańsk
(Danzig)
Danzig Vistula
Dziewięc Wlók
(Neunhuben)
Radunia R.
Motława River
DANZIG
WERDER
Stutthof
Zalew Wiślany
Vistula Bay
Elbing Vistula
Żuławki
(***Fürstenwerder)
Niedźwiedzica
(†Bärwalde)
Tujsk
(Tiegenort)
Nowa Koscielnica
(Neumünsterberg)
Orłowskie Pole
(†Orlofferfelde)
Cyganek-Żelichowo
(**† Tiegenhagen)
Jeziernik
(Schönsee)
Orłowo
(Orloff)
Nowy Dwór
(Tiegenhof)
Suchowo
(**Rosenort)
Stawiec
(*† Ladekopp)
River
LARGE
ELBING
LOWLANDS
*† Ellerwald
Wikrowo
(Wickerau)
Elbląg
(Elbing)
Pordenowo
(*† Pordenau)
Tuja (Tiege)
Nowy Staw
(Neuteich)
Myszewo
(Gross Mausdorf)
Tczew
(Dirschau)
MARIENBURG
LITTLE
MARIENBURG
WERDER
Lake
Druzno
Stogi
(*† Heubuden)
Nogat
Stare Pole
(Altfelde)
Rozgart
(† Preussisch
Rosengart)
Jezioro
(Thiensdorf)
WERDER
Markusy
(*Markushof)
Szalieniec
(*† Thörichthof)
Malbork
(† Marienburg)
Sztum
(Stuhm)
Rudniki
(** Rudnerweide)
Barcice
**† Tragheimerweide
Matowskie Pastwiska
(** Montauerweide)
Gniew
(Mewe)
Vistula River
The Vistula Delta
Restored Cemeteries in the Vistula Delta
* Indicates cemetery restored by (mostly) Dutch volunteers
** Indicates cemetery restored by local government and schools
*** Indicates cemetery restored by local land owner
† Cities/Villages with former Mennonite churches
Cities/Larger Towns in the Region
(former German names in parentheses)
Geographic Features are Current

# II

# SETTLEMENTS IN THE VISTULA-NOGAT DELTA

**The Vistula-Nogat-Delta**

The fertile area between Danzig and Elbing was drained by two major rivers, the Vistula and the Nogat, that created three main agricultural areas. Between Danzig and the Vistula, the Danzig Werder—also known as the Little Werder—formed a comparatively narrow but fertile strip of farmland. Then between the Vistula and the Nogat lay the agricultural heartland of this region, the Large Werder, noted for its grain and milk production. To the east, between the Nogat and the highlands, the Little Werder similarly was dotted by farms. Together these regions formed a prosperous, highly productive part of the realm. During the sixteenth century, this region became the new homeland of hundreds of Mennonites who had fled persecution elsewhere, or who had been invited because of their agricultural and commercial skills.

During the previous century, war and flooding had left parts of this region desolate. The low terrain and the rivers could create hazardous conditions, especially in times of war when dikes might not be maintained. During the 16th century, new settlers helped to build higher and stronger dikes, so that flooding dangers were reduced. Special wardens of the dikes were appointed to make sure dikes remained in good condition.

It should also be noted that rivers were important avenues for travel, but especially vital for transportation of goods from the interior. The prosperity of a city such as Danzig and of the agricultural communities in the delta was closely related to the Vistula. It would not be inaccurate to modify a phrase from Herodotus and suggest that Danzig was the gift of the Vistula.

**Danzig and the Delta**

Ties between Danzig and the Netherlands rested upon shared commercial interests. In the middle of the 16th century, more than a thousand Dutch ships came to Danzig annually. Dutch skill in reclaiming land from the sea was already legendary, and so it was not surprising that the city of Danzig decided to invite Dutch settlers to drain some of the marshlands that the city

had acquired following the defeat of the Teutonic Knights. Thus, in 1547 the Danzig city council sent Philip Edzema to the Netherlands to find settlers who might come to farm some of the lowlands under the city's jurisdiction.

Dutch settlers soon restored much of the land to productivity; they built new dikes, dug ditches and drained the land so that it could be farmed. Danzig discovered, however, that many of the newcomers were Anabaptists, or Mennonites, and so the city tried to compel adherence to the approved religion. In 1582 settlers in some of the newly founded villages such as Scharfenberg, Wotzlaff and Neuendorf petitioned the city government to grant religious toleration. Describing themselves as "subjects who are derisively called Anabaptists or Mennonites," they requested the council to observe agreements made thirty years earlier, when there had been no attempt to force religious conformity. Eventually the council decided to impose a special tax and grant the settlers' request for religious liberty.

Other settlements, such as Neunhuben (Dziewięc Włok) Gross- and Klein-Walddorf (Wielki Waldorf) and Quadendorf (Przejazdowo) were also reclaimed from marshlands. At the same time, the city followed a vacillating religious policy, sometimes declaring that all religious services by "heretics" were to be stopped. At other times, as in 1650, local authorities prohibited further acquisition of lands by Mennonites. Repeatedly, however, the Polish king issued edicts declaring Mennonites free to practice their religion. King Władysław IV in 1642 issued a typical statement:

> *At the humble request of the aforementioned inhabitants of our Marienburg islands, we retain and protect completely, without exception, each and every right, privilege, freedom and custom granted by the gracious Sigismund Augustus, our grandfather and confirmed by the gracious Stephen, Sigismund III....*[6]

Such assurances of royal support provided a very significant measure of protection and toleration for the Mennonites coming from the Netherlands. Sometimes, however, the more immediate authorities in the area, such as local lords and city councils, adopted policies much more stringent and exclusionary than those promulgated by a distant king. Throughout most of the 16th and 17th centuries the Vistula Delta and other regions along the Vistula remained a mixture of tolerant and intolerant jurisdictions.

In some instances villages were developed jointly between Dutch and native settlers. In Fischerbabke (Rybina), the Dutch

drained the land and raised cattle, while the native settlers derived their livelihood from fishing. Other villages, such as Glabitsch (Głobica) and Steegnerwerder (Stegienka), also owed their development to collaborative efforts between Dutch and native settlers.

Sometimes, as in the case of Poppau (Popowo), land that lay below sea level was leased to Dutch settlers. They reclaimed the land and established a small village there. In other villages, they formed part of the population and often simply settled among the native inhabitants.

Just west of the lagoon, called the Frisches Haff or the Vistula Bay, and south of the Szkarpawa stream, some of the land lies 1.5 meters below sea level, and thus forms the lowest depression in the area. This region, once called the "Scharpau," was acquired by Danzig in 1530. The city determined to gain some profits from what was then swampy wasteland, and so again invited Dutch settlers to drain the land. Beiershorst (Wybicko), and Altebabke (Babki), as well as other areas, were soon made arable, although some of the land remained marshland for decades.

### In Danzig and Its Environs

Prosperous and proud, Danzig dominated trade in the eastern Baltic during the 16th century. As a major member of the Hansa, the city had come to exert considerable influence far beyond the Polish and Prussian coastlines. Each year several hundred ships sailed from Danzig for points west. These vessels brought with them a wide variety of commodities as well as people with nontraditional points of view.

As early as the 1530s, Danzig began to express concern over the alleged arrival of Anabaptists. Although the city had embraced the Lutheran Reformation and had introduced Lutheran practices throughout most of the numerous churches, opposition to "heresy" remained vigorous. Nonetheless, Anabaptists continued to come. Often called Mennonites by the middle of the 16th century, they found new homes in Schottland, an area just south of the city walls of Danzig and owned by the bishop of Włocławek. A nearby village, Schidlitz, also provided a haven for the Mennonites. Both Schottland and Schidlitz[7] remained major Mennonite centers until the devastation brought by the Napoleonic Wars.

For the bishop, economic returns were more convincing than religious uniformity. He permitted the Mennonites to practice their religion and, at the same time, to employ their skills as merchants and craftsmen. One facet of the cloth trade in particular—the making of braid and lace—developed rapidly within the Mennonite community. As the marketing of these com-

modities began, the Danzig guilds voiced strong opposition and persuaded the Danzig city council to take action against the Mennonite craftsmen and merchants.

The economic strife between Danzig and the neighboring villages continued for more than a century. Repeatedly, craftsmen in Danzig persuaded the city council to issue decrees restricting the sale of lace and braid within the city. Members of the cloth-making guilds tried to bar Mennonites from both manufacturing and the selling of these products. At the Diet of Thorn in 1571, emissaries from Danzig charged that adherents of "harmful sects"[8] were taking bread out of the mouths of its citizens. Despite such protests from a city as powerful as Danzig, Polish bishops and kings repeatedly asserted and often expanded Mennonite economic rights.

Polish rulers, from Sigismund II Augustus to Stanisław II Augustus, took the Mennonites under royal protection. On October 23, 1623, King Sigismund III issued a decree confirming clothmaking rights for settlers in Schottland. On December 30, 1634, King Władysław IV reaffirmed and extended these privileges, and, in 1642, he issued a charter of liberties in which he praised the economic productivity of the Mennonites. Later rulers took a similar position. On June 22, 1649, King John Casimir decreed that the traditional rights of the Mennonites should be upheld. In 1660, when Mennonites in Tiegenhof (Nowy Dwór) and Bärwalde (Niedźwiedzica) were threatened with seizure of their lands, he declared them to be under his protection. Again, in 1681, the king firmly informed the city of Danzig that it could not deprive Mennonites of the privileges he had conferred upon them. Toward the end of the 17th century, King John III Sobieski instructed his officials to make more land and economic opportunities available to Mennonites. In 1784, Stanisław II Augustus, last of the Polish monarchs, once again issued a vigorous defense of the customary Mennonite rights and privileges.[9] Thus, from the beginning of Mennonite migration to Poland until the extinction of the Polish monarchy, Polish kings usually remained strong champions of toleration toward the Mennonites.

Despite such royal protection and favor, Danzig only slowly and grudgingly allowed Mennonites to settle within the city. In 1656, during war with Sweden, Danzig military commanders decided to strengthen their defensive position by burning villages on the outskirts of the city. Schottland and Schidlitz, where most of the Mennonites in the area lived, were also razed, and so the city council permitted some Mennonite families to settle in the city. Gradually this number increased. At

the same time, Mennonites were granted limited trading concessions and were permitted to buy property, including land, within the city. Soon they built two churches—one each for the Flemish and Frisian groups. Nonetheless, Mennonites were not granted full citizenship, and when the craft guilds complained about the business activities of the Mennonites, King Augustus III, in sharp contrast to usual royal practice and despite vigorous opposition by an emissary from the Netherlands, issued a decree to restrict Mennonite economic activities. Further acquisition of city land was prohibited; Mennonites were to buy their raw materials only from Danzig citizens; their goods were to be sold only in Danzig. In addition, a Mennonite was not to engage simultaneously in manufacturing and in selling.

In Danzig, Mennonites were also granted exemption from military service, although they had to meet various alternative obligations to the state. When Danzig was besieged by Russian troops in 1734 and incendiary explosives were thrown into the city, Mennonites were employed to fight the resulting fires. On other occasions, Mennonites were assessed an additional tax in lieu of war service. Thus, in 1749 King Augustus III imposed a tax of 5,000 florins on the Danzig Mennonites.

**The Mennonite Church in Danzig**

By the middle of the 16th century, Mennonites had established themselves in villages outside the walls of Danzig. Menno Simons evidently spent some time here, assisting the young congregation, for in 1549 he penned a letter to his fellow-believers in Prussia and referred to his visit among them. Menno's associate, Dirk Philips, took up residence in this area and emerged as the first permanent leader of the Mennonites here. As new congregations arose in lowlands along the Vistula, Philips came to centers such as Montau and installed elders (ca. 1568). The Danzig Mennonites grew steadily during the latter part of the 16th century, especially as the armies of the Duke of Alva spread fire and destruction throughout much of the Netherlands. Mennonites, as "heretics," were subject to especially heavy persecution, and so, many tried to find a new home in the more tolerant climate of the Vistula Delta. By 1598 their number in the environs of Danzig had increased to such an extent that their former elder, Quirin Vermeulen, resident in Schottland, printed a Dutch translation of the Bible.[10]

At the same time, the divisions that had arisen among Mennonites in the Netherlands were perpetuated in the Danzig area. Thus, both Flemish and Frisian congregations arose. The former were more rigid in

matters of church discipline, especially in enforcing the ban (exclusion from the congregation of a member who had violated church practices). As the number of Mennonites in the Vistula lowlands increased, Flemish and Frisian congregations arose there as well. Both groups retained close ties with similar congregations in the Netherlands. Gradually, the Flemish congregations included Danzig (centered in Schottland), Elbing, the large rural congregation in Rosenort in the lowlands, as well as others. Frisian congregations, in addition to the one in Neugarten, on the outskirts of Danzig, included those in Montau as well as the large rural congregations of Orlofferfelde in the Vistula Delta, and Thiensdorf, in the lowlands just east of the Nogat River.

Although Mennonites were permitted to settle on land just outside the city walls, the city of Danzig long remained largely closed to them, both for residence and trade. Mennonites sometimes evaded these restrictions by leasing land or buildings within the city. On the other hand, owners of land, outside the city wall, such as a Catholic bishop who wanted his land made profitable, granted extensive rights to the new settlers. Danzig, however, feared that Mennonites might provide too much economic competition for some of its citizens if the barriers were removed. Thus, throughout much of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, various restrictions were imposed on Mennonites. Indeed, full citizenship was made available to Mennonites only in 1800. In Danzig, the "third estate" (representatives of the city's numerous guilds) was especially vocal in its opposition to the Mennonites, for it feared that Mennonite craftsmen would encroach upon the trade enjoyed by the guilds.

Economic factors long remained a source of friction between Mennonites and the guilds. When the Peace of Oliwa (1660) ended the war, Mennonites returned to Schottland and other areas where they had previously lived. Despite vigorous objections by the third estate, including appeals to the Polish King, John Casimir, Mennonites were permitted to rebuild their homes and resume their earlier farming and production of various goods. Soon their shops and homes were restored, thanks in significant measure to financial aid sent by their fellow-believers in the Netherlands. Once again, Mennonites resumed their weaving, making of lace and braid, as well as various other articles for sale along the Vistula. Royal edicts repeatedly confirmed their rights to manufacture and sell freely.

Despite continued attempts at repression or expulsion. Mennonites were able to maintain themselves near the city proper, and also to construct their own church buildings. In 1638 the Frisian congregation

acquired land near the Neugarten city gate and built its church there. The Flemish congregation in turn built its house of worship near the Petershagen gate. Both congregations immediately constructed hospices for the elderly and needy; the practice of mutual aid had always been a central teaching of the Mennonites. For a full two centuries, Mennonites retained their native Dutch language. Cultural and religious ties to the Netherlands delayed full accommodation to the dominant German culture in Danzig and other parts of the Vistula-Nogat Delta.

For decades, Danzig church services were still conducted in Dutch. Not until 1762 did the Flemish congregation have its first sermon in German—and then only because the preacher was a guest from Elbing, where German was already in use. The adoption of the local language, however, was inevitable, and in 1768 Elder Hans von Steen published a catechism in German.[11] Similarly, in 1780 the Danzig Mennonites adopted their first German hymnal. In part it included translated versions of the Dutch Psalms used earlier; in part, it incorporated new songs written by the ministers Peter Thiessen, Jacob de Veer and their associates. Some German Psalms from the Lutheran tradition were also used.

While these changes into German were being implemented, the situation in Danzig and, indeed, in all of Royal Prussia was being dramatically altered. In 1772 the first partition of Poland brought the Vistula Delta (but not Danzig) under Prussian rule. In 1793, however, the proud, long independent city was forced to accept Prussian rule. Not long thereafter, the Napoleonic Wars brought devastation to Danzig. In 1807 the city fell to besieging French troops, and for seven years, Danzig existed as a "free state" under French control. During the hostilities, both Mennonite church buildings were destroyed. Those members who had taken up residence in the city now began holding their church services in an English chapel within the city.

When the war ended, the two congregations faced the task of rebuilding. Their shared loss and destruction had brought them together, and they resolved to unite into one congregation and build one church structure. Accordingly, on July 9, 1818, under the leadership of Abraham de Veer, the congregation began the building of a new house of worship. On September 12, 1819, the new church was dedicated as the "United Frisian and Flemish Mennonite Church." The structure was packed with visiting dignitaries and members of the congregation as Elder Peter Thiessen spoke the solemn words of dedication. From that time until 1945, services were regularly conducted there.

DEN

BYBEL

Dat is

De Boecken der heyligher Schrifture / uytten oirspronckelycken Hebreeuschen ende Griecksschen ghetrouwelick verduytschet.

Rom. 15, 4.

Al wat te voren gheschreven is, dat is tot onser leere geschreven, op dat wy door lijdtsaemheyt ende vertroostinge der Schrifture een hope hebben.

2. Timoth. 3, 14.

Men vindtse te coop by Quirijn Vermeulen/de jonghe Cramer/ woonende opte lege syde van Schotlandt, by Dansicke. 1598.

The title page of the Dutch Bible published by Quirin Vermeulen and printed in Haarlem. The text is that of the widely used version generally called the "Biestkens Bible," after Nikolaes Biestkens, a Dutch Mennonite printer.

**Challenge and Change in the 19th Century**

In many respects, the century between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the outbreak of World War I witnessed a series of dramatic changes in Danzig and, indeed, in all Mennonite communities of the area. Traditional distinctives were challenged as new economic, political, cultural and nationalistic realities shaped a new society. Acculturation became increasingly apparent.

In 1800 Mennonites were given rights of citizenship in Danzig; questions concerning civic rights and responsibilities, including military obligations, became pressing issues for congregations. During most of the following century, Mennonites served in various public offices, including the city council. Others held teaching positions in the noted Danzig Gymnasium. Many also became an important factor in the city's trade and quickly established themselves evermore fully as traders, merchants, and various kinds of entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, Mennonite religious practices also underwent modification. In 1826 the Danzig church decided to adopt a new policy concerning the ministry; the first salaried minister, Jacob van der Smissen, was appointed. This break with entrenched tradition occasioned considerable criticism, but soon other congregations followed suit. Another major change occurred in 1845 when Jacob Mannhardt, then pastor of the Danzig church, founded the periodical, *Mennonitische Blätter*. In the following decades the paper established itself as the chief literary bond among Prussian, indeed, all German, churches. It served as a forum for discussion and a means for information dissemination until German government authorities stopped its publication in the early stages of World War II.

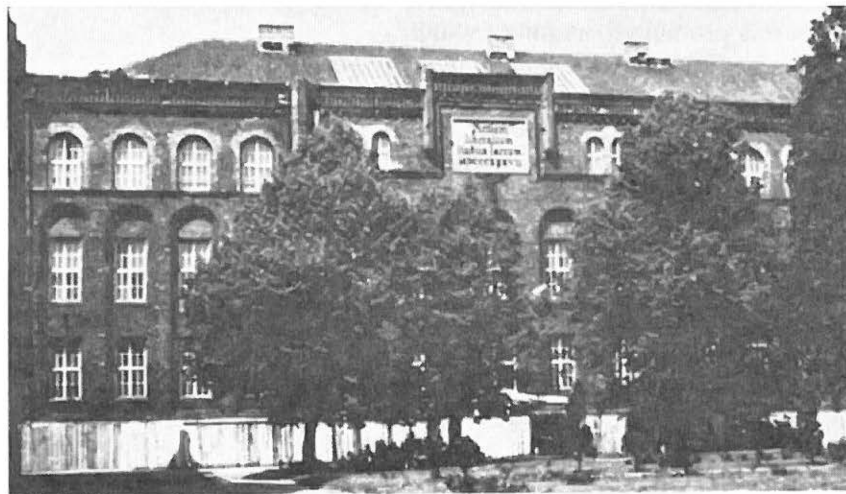
Certainly one of the severest challenges to face Danzig and other Prussian Mennonites in the 19th century was the issue of military service. For a time after the Prussian seizure of Royal Prussia in 1772, military exemption was maintained, but Mennonites were compelled to pay a specified amount to help maintain a military academy in Kulm. In addition, further acquisition of lands was prohibited, as military obligations were tied to the land. Mennonites responded to these restrictions by seeking new lands, especially in South Russia, where the recent conquests of Catherine II had made vast steppes available in the Ukraine. During the greater part of the 19th century, Prussian authorities pressed for the abolition of Mennonite exemption from military obligations. Finally, in 1867, a Prussian edict abolished military exemption, although service as noncombatants remained an option. Debate raged through-

out the Prussian Mennonite community, but in Danzig the answer was decisive; on October 2, 1870, the local Mennonite church unanimously adopted a resolution rejecting the traditional insistence on pacifism. Individual members were now free to make their own choices, although ministers often urged young men to select noncombatant military service. Gradually, however, this emphasis waned, and regular military service became common.

## A House Divided and Scattered

For most Danzig Mennonites, as indeed for most inhabitants of that city, the 20th century brought difficult and frustrating change. Following World War I, when the victors created the Danzig Free State, this area soon found itself caught in the middle of a power struggle between larger political and military powers. Eventually, these tensions became a major factor in bringing about the outbreak of World War II. On September 1, 1939, the first shots were fired in Danzig territory. The city was quickly seized by German forces. Like other citizens in this center, Mennonites were compelled to support the new government; young men were drafted for military service, and Mennonite congregations sustained heavy losses.

When the war ended, Danzig lay in ruins. Soviet troops took the city in the end of March 1945. By then, many inhabitants had already fled to the west. Others were forced to leave, so that virtually no members of the Mennonite Church remained in the city. The church building had suffered damage but was soon restored to its original purpose. This time, however, parishioners were not Mennonite, nor was the language German. Following negotiations with the postwar Polish authorities, the Polish United Evangelical Church took possession of the structure. Today, a thriving Pentecostal congregation worships there regularly. Four centuries of a Mennonite presence in Danzig seemed largely forgotten in the new Gdańsk, but have recently come to hold a prominent position in local historical memory.



**The Danzig *Gymnasium* established itself as a major center of learning. Its instructors included the noted Mennonite civic figure Albert Momber as well as the historian Gottfried Lengnich and astronomer Johannes Hevelius.**

# SETTLEMENTS IN THE VISTULA-NOGAT DELTA

## Elbing and Vicinity

### The City

As Poland's major outlet to the Baltic, Danzig tended to dominate economic development in the Vistula Delta. The port of Elbing, however, also figured prominently in the history of this region. Indeed, sometimes it presented a direct challenge to its more famous rival. Situated just off the lagoon known as the Vistula Bay, or the Zalew Wiślany, Elbing (Elbląg) provided a natural setting for trade. Soon after it was founded by the Order of Teutonic Knights in 1237, merchants from Lübeck and elsewhere established a trading center here. The town became an important outlet for forest and farm products destined for markets in western Europe. As a member of the Hansa, Elbing had access to substantial markets, although its rival Danzig usually dominated trade coming from the Vistula region.

Like a number of other important commercial centers in the Vistula Delta and further upstream, Elbing eventually found the domination by the Order too oppressive and joined other cities in a war to throw off the yoke of a system that had lost much of its earlier dynamism and vision. In the Thirteen Years War, the League of Prussian Cities, in alliance with the King of Poland, defeated the Order. Elbing declared its allegiance to the Polish crown; the king in turn granted the city a large measure of self-rule. In addition, the city was able to retain sizable adjacent lands. As a vassal city-state of King Casimir IV, Elbing was largely free to chart its own course.

In 1577 tension between Danzig and Poland's king, Stephen Batory, erupted into war. In an effort to break Danzig's economic strength, the king transferred the Hansa center from Danzig to Elbing and decreed that Poland's exports through the Baltic must pass through Elbing.[12] English traders in particular used this opportunity to expand their trade in Elbing, and the Eastland Company, in quest of grain and shipbuilding materials, established a center in Elbing. Danzig vigorously objected to this loss of its most favored position, but the king triumphed.

For the next half century, the Elbing-English connection brought expanded trade and prosperity to Elbing. Of some 200 ships coming annually to Elbing, one-third came from England. English and Scottish merchants established residence there and were often granted citizenship. Indeed, at least five of them served on the city council during the 17th century, and one of them, Charles Ramsey, became mayor. During the latter part of the 16th century, as many as 97 families settled in the city. At the same time, because a number of them were Calvinists, the reformed faith gained new strength in a city dominated by Lutheranism. Growing

religious toleration characterized the vibrant city.

For a time, prosperity and toleration became hallmarks of the city. Its economic growth was dealt a severe blow by the Thirty Years War and by the prolonged Polish-Swedish wars in the 18th century. Elbing never fully recovered. When, in 1772, Prussia, Russia and Austria carried out the first partition of Poland, Elbing and its territories fell under Prussian rule.

**The Elbing Lowlands**

Commercial ties between the Low Countries and Elbing were already firmly established by the end of the Middle Ages. Then, with the religious upheavals of the 16th century, a new wave of settlers came to Elbing. Because many of the newcomers were Anabaptists fleeing the wrath of the Duke of Alva, questions of religious conformity were soon raised in Elbing.

As early as 1531, the Bishop of Ermland (Warmia), who held ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the city, warned the city council to be on guard against heretics from the Low Countries. Elbing, however, had suffered greatly in the 1519-21 war, so that many villages in its hinterland lay desolate. New settlers were welcome. Some Elbing landowners invited Mennonites to settle on land near the city, so that a Mennonite community began to develop. Not all of the newcomers were content to pursue farming, and by the middle of the century, Elbing craftsmen complained to King Sigismund Augustus about loss of business to the newcomers. Although the king ordered their expulsion, the effect must have been minimal, for by the 1580s some Mennonites acquired Elbing citizenship. By 1590 Mennonites in the city were permitted to have their own house of worship—the first such permission in a major Polish or Prussian city.

Despite such positive developments, tensions between Mennonites and citizens in Elbing continued. Craftsmen resented the competition created by the newcomers from the Netherlands, while merchants tried to exclude the Hollanders from what was still a thriving trade with various parts of the Baltic and beyond. Attempts to exclude Mennonites met with only limited success. In 1572 the city council decreed that Mennonites were to be expelled, but should be allowed to remain until they had harvested their crops. The expulsion was never implemented. By 1612 some sixteen families had settled within the city walls.

Outside the city to the west, Mennonites were permitted to settle in the lowlands around Elbing. Marshlands and other areas described as "unusable" were leased to the new settlers, and in the 1560s, the Ellerwald, a brush, forest and swamp lowland west of the city was made available for settlement.

Parcels of land were distributed by lot.[13] Using the skills they had brought with them, the Mennonites began a systematic drainage program by building dikes, canals, drainage ditches and windmills.

Lands leased to Mennonites were held in accordance with local emphyteutic tenure. This involved longterm leases, with specified rents to be paid annually. Terms of the lease typically were designed to provide incentives for development of the land. Agreements were usually for several decades and could be inherited or sold. General supervision over the Ellerwald and the villages established there was exercised by prominent citizens chosen by the Elbing City Council.

When the formal distribution of land in the Ellerwald occurred on February 10, 1565, the city established regulations for the newcomers. These village regulations, known as the "Dorfsordnung," were later modified to permit Mennonites to participate in revision or adoption of the regulations. The last version of the "Dorfsordnung" appeared in 1754. Soon thereafter the absorption of Elbing and the Ellerwald into the Prussian state created a different relationship between settlers in the area and the city of Elbing.

The regulations issued for the Ellerwald settlers reflected the realities of the time. Settlers were urged to be devout members of their church. Physical labor was forbidden during the time of church services. Similarly, during this time no beer or brandy was to be sold. Other "blue laws" stipulated that dancing, card playing and gaming were prohibited on Sundays, while flashy clothing was forbidden by city regulations. Education was taken seriously, and parents were instructed to send their children to school regularly.

Local government was left largely in the hands of the settlers. The area was divided into five administrative units, with each one headed by a "Schulze." Each of these chief administrators was assisted by a "Ratmann." Both the "Schulze" and the "Ratmann" were elected for a period of three years. The "Schulze" was charged with general supervision of the community's well-being, such as maintenance of dikes, canals, bridges, locks and roads. The actual work was done by the settlers. The system worked so well that it has been described as having no equal in the whole Vistula-Nogat Delta.[14]

The condition of the land often determined the terms of the lease. In 1586 Mennonites were given especially favorable terms in exchange for building dikes and draining a swampland at Kerbswalde and Aschbuden. For two years the farmers were given free use of the land, although in later years the cost of the lease was substantially increased. Most of the drained land was set-

tled by Mennonites. Another nearby village was founded on pastureland at Blumenort. A 29-year lease gave the settlers the necessary incentive to improve their holdings. Adjacent land was also leased, and here the village of Rosenort was established. Gradually, the marshy lowlands became increasingly profitable farms.

Continued drainage programs permitted Mennonites to help develop land so that new settlements, Nogatau (1602) and Kerbshorst (1636), came into being. By the middle of the 17th century, other villages that had been founded on reclaimed land included Bollwerk, Keitlau, Schlammsack and Schwarzdamm.

Another low-lying region near Elbing, the "Einlage," bordered the Nogat and was usable only as pasture because of regular flooding, but it provided further opportunity for Mennonite settlement. In 1640, the city council, hoping to increase the city's income, made part of the Einlage available to the brothers Abraham and Jacob Wiebe, for an initial period of fifteen years. More settlers came, and soon the region took on the appearance of an island, surrounded by dikes, canals and rivers. A century later, two-thirds of the farmers in the area were Mennonites, and passing decades did not significantly alter this situation.

Other settlement occurred in this area on lands that had once been cultivated by the Teutonic Knights, but had become desolate when the Order was defeated in the 15th century. Klein Mausdorf and Krebsfelde were restored to productivity with the coming of Mennonite settlers. Part of the Drausen (Druzno) Lake bottom, just south of Elbing, was also reclaimed in Dutch polder fashion. Other marshy lands nearby were also brought under cultivation, as were villages once devastated by war. Soon the region south of Elbing and east of the Nogat, the "little island" (Kleines Werder) was dotted with villages built or expanded by Mennonites, Schönwiese, Thörichthof (Szaleniec). Preussisch Rosengart (Rozgart), Thiensdorf (Jezioro), Rosenort (Jurandowo), Markushof (Markusy), Thiergart (Zwierzno) and others. Increasingly, Mennonites were coming to be recognized as desirable and successful farmers. In 1676 when the voivode [military commander] of Pommerelia urged the Polish Parliament to expel Mennonites as dangerous heretics, they were staunchly defended by Polish administrators from Marienburg.[15]

Late in the 17th century, the Elbing City Council decided to increase the income from some of its other lands by allowing some wooded or marshy areas to be developed for farming, especially grazing of cattle. Some 30 farms, with strong Mennonite participation, were begun near the village

Jungfer. As the settlement expanded, new villages, such as Walldorf, Lakendorf, Fürstenauerweide and others came into being. In some villages, such as Walldorf, Mennonites farmed four-fifths of the land; in other villages, the amount varied, but was always substantial.

When Elbing and its lands were incorporated into Prussia in the first Polish partition of 1772, Mennonites constituted a prosperous element in the larger community. Some 329 families lived on Elbing land at that time and constituted about 29 percent of the total.

### Mennonite Churches in and Near Elbing

In 1590, the first Mennonite church in Elbing was built as the first Mennonite church structure anywhere in the Vistula-Nogat Delta. This building served the congregation until 1900, when it was replaced by a new church built on the west side of the Elbing River, on what was then known as Berliner Strasse. This church still stands and serves a Polish Catholic parish. It is situated on Ulica (street) Warszawska at Ulica Orla. In 1783, the Elbing congregation built another church, this time in the heart of Mennonite farmlands, in Ellerwald, only a few kilometers west of Elbing. The two churches functioned as one congregation, sharing elders and ministers. Both churches remained active until the end of World War II.

In the middle of the 19th century, another congregation was formed in the city. Disagreement over the necessity of having professionally trained ministers helped to induce some members of the Elbing-Ellerwald congregation to form a new group. They invited Carl Harder, who had just completed a theological program at the University of Halle, to provide pastoral leadership. In 1852, this group was able to dedicate a new church building. It continued to function as a church until the closing days of World War II, when it was destroyed.

### A Century of Transition

For Mennonites in Elbing and vicinity, as for other Mennonites under Prussian rule, the 19th century produced strains upon traditional practices and values. Intellectual and cultural trends sometimes created tensions between Mennonite congregations in the city and the more conservative rural elements. In addition, the Prussian government's restrictions on further acquisition of land by Mennonites motivated a good number to emigrate to Russia late in the 18th and during the first half of the 19th centuries.

An especially acute problem arose when exemption from military service was

ended. Some church leaders were prepared to accept the new conditions; others, such as Elder Andreas of the Elbing-Ellerwald congregation, insisted that those who accepted military service could not receive communion. Most of his parishioners refused to support this stance, and so he, together with some of his members, emigrated to the United States in 1870.

Mennonites in Elbing had a long history of being involved in the usually prosperous commercial life of the city. Some of them were merchants, owners of iron works, shipbuilders, brewers, educators and other professionals. It is not surprising that congregations in the nearby countryside sometimes looked askance at what they regarded as a too accommodating attitude in the city. Further acculturation occurred as increasing numbers of Mennonites studied at the highly-regarded Gymnasium in Elbing.

Following World War I, Elbing, unlike Danzig and the Marienburg Werder, remained a part of Germany, and was thus spared some of the political and economic uncertainty that became evident in the Danzig Free State. The city, however, suffered almost total destruction in the latter stages of World War II. Today, many new buildings, some rebuilt in the earlier architectural style, welcome the visitor.

**The Large Marienburg Werder (Żuławy)**
**Draining the Marshlands**

Today's visitor to the lowlands that lie in the huge triangle formed by the Vistula, Nogat and the Gulf of Gdańsk is at once impressed by the flat, green meadows, the large herds of cattle and the productive fields of grain that cover the rich, fertile soil. Villages, still largely agricultural, dot the countryside, while an extensive network of canals, ditches and dikes suggests that this land has been reclaimed from the sea.

Throughout most of modern times, this area has been known as the "Large Marienburg Werder," from a term meaning island. Land immediately to the east, on the right side of the Nogat, was called the "little Marienburg Werder," and extended from Marienburg (now Malbork) to Lake Drausen (now Lake Druzno).

Attempts to dam the rivers and drain the lands began in earnest when the Teutonic Knights gained control of this region in the 13th century. On the right bank of the Nogat they built the mighty castle, the Marienburg, that dominated the countryside. Gradually a town grew up around the castle, and for centuries Marienburg served as the administrative center of an area that included most of the large Werder as well as lands south and east of the city.

In the Thirteen Years War (1453-1466), Marienburg and the Werder passed under

the control of the Polish crown. During the war, however, much of the land had been devastated. The situation was made even worse when, in a futile effort to regain control of the region, Grand Master Albert in 1519 led the Knights into a war with Sigismund I. The Werder was pillaged and many of the villages left desolate. Finally, in 1523 an "eternal peace" was proclaimed, but the area lay in ruins. Further devastation occurred in 1526 when high water broke through the dike at Schöneberg. The economic distress of the region is indicated by the fact that it took five years to repair the dike. Many of the inhabitants decided to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

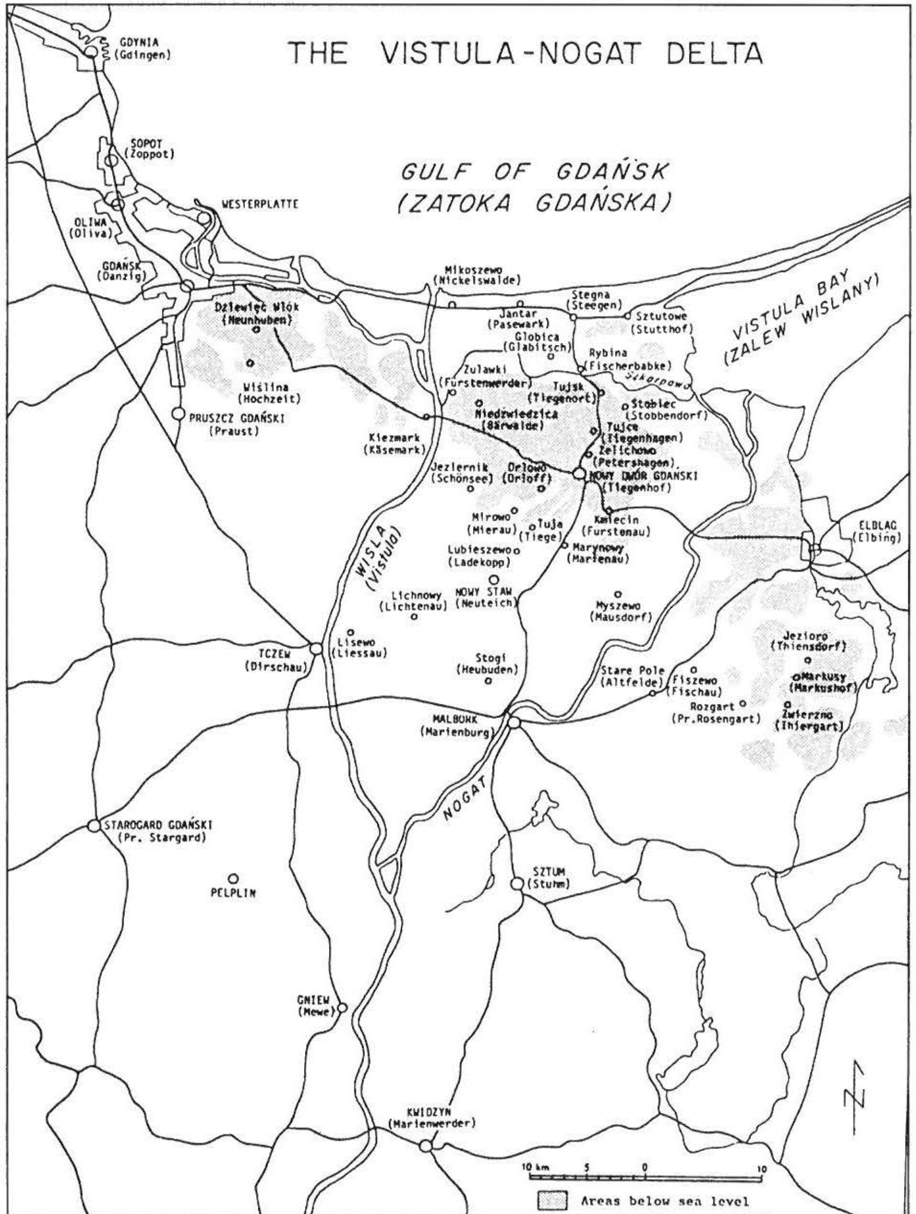
For the next several decades the Polish king tried to find methods whereby his newly acquired lands might be made more profitable. He appointed his personal representative, or "starosta," to be administrator of the Marienburg Werder. Marienburg served as the seat of local government, and from then until the first partition of Poland in 1772, the proud city on the Nogat was the center of local royal authority.

The Werder was indeed an island, bounded by the two major rivers, the Vistula and the Nogat on the west, south and east, while in the north, the Elbing Vistula (later known as the Szkarpawa), together with the lagoon, the Frisches Haff, completed the encirclement by water. Territory to the north of the Elbing Vistula, also in the delta, had been given to Danzig in return for that city's support of the king against the Knights, and was thus outside the jurisdiction of Marienburg. The whole area formed part of Royal Prussia (later called West Prussia). Adjacent territory to the east, known as Ducal Prussia (also East Prussia) remained under the rule of the Duke of Prussia.

Lands in the Large Marienburg Werder were subject to a variety of jurisdictions. Some of the area formed part of the crown lands, and was thus directly under the supervision of the king's representative. Other areas were owned by cities, the church or various landlords. and thus only indirectly subject to the Polish crown.

For the Werder, the 16th century was the time of recovery and development. In the middle of the century, King Sigismund II Augustus leased a number of desolate villages to the Loitz brothers—Simon, Hans and Stephen—who invited Dutch settlers, the Mennonites, to restore the lands to productivity. Soon villages such as Ladekopp (Lubieszewo), Orloff (Orłowo), Tiege (Tuja), Reimerswalde (Leśnowo), Tiegenhagen (Cyganek) and Petershagen (Żelichowo) were restored to at least a measure of prosperity. Dikes were rebuilt, lands drained, crops and cattle raised again.[16]

In the 1570s, another prominent land-


THE VISTULA-NOGAT DELTA
GDYNIA (Gdingen)
SOPOT (Zoppot)
WESTERPLATTE
OLIWA (Oliva)
GDAŃSK (Danzig)
GULF OF GDAŃSK
(ZATOKA GDAŃSKA)
Dziewięć Włók (Neunhuben)
Wiślina (Hochzeit)
PRUSZCZ GDAŃSKI (Praust)
Mikoszewo (Nickelswalde)
Jantar (Pasewark)
Stegna (Steegen)
Sztutowe (Stutthof)
VISTULA BAY (ZALEW WISLANY)
Globica (Glabitsch)
Rybina (Fischerbabke)
Szkarpawa
Żuławki (Furstenwerder)
Tujsk (Tiegenort)
Stobiec (Stobbendorf)
Niedźwiedzica (Bärwalde)
Kiezmark (Käsemark)
Tujce (Tiegenhagen)
Żelichowo (Petershagen)
Jezierník (Schönsee)
Orłowo (Orloff)
NOWY DWÓR GDAŃSKI (Tiegenhof)
Mirowo (Mierau)
Tuja (Tiege)
Kmiecin (Furstenau)
ELBLAG (Elbing)
Lubieszewo (Ladekopp)
Marynowy (Marienau)
WISLA (Vistula)
Lichnowy (Lichtenau)
NOWY STAW (Neuteich)
Myszewo (Mausdorf)
Lisewo (Liessau)
Jezioro (Thiensdorf)
TCZEW (Dirschau)
Stogi (Heubuden)
Stare Pole (Altfelde)
Fiszewo (Fischau)
Markusy (Markushof)
Rozgart (Pr.Rosengart)
Zwierzno (Thiergart)
MALBORK (Marienburg)
NOGAT
STAROGARD GDAŃSKI (Pr. Stargard)
SZTUM (Stuhm)
PELPLIN
GNIEW (Mewe)
KWIDZYN (Marienwerder)
10 km 5 0 10
Areas below sea level

lord in the region, Ernst von Weiher, invited Mennonites to settle along the Tiege (Tuga) River, near his castle. One of the new settlements came to be known as Weihershof; later it took the name Tiegenhof (now Nowy Dwór). Some of the land in the area was at or below sea level and thus required extensive drainage. Nonetheless, numerous villages arose along the Tiege and nearby, among them Tiegerweide, Pletzendorf, Altendorf Stobbendorf (Stobiec) and others. In most cases, the new settlers were allowed to acquire their lands in long-term tenure. It should also be noted that villages were often developed through the joint efforts of Mennonites and other settlers. Relative religious toleration allowed persons of different faiths to live peacefully together in the various villages of the werder.

In other parts of the Large Werder, such as the region just across the Nogat, northwest of Marienburg, the village of Heubuden (Stogi) became the center of one of the largest Mennonite congregations in the entire werder. Farther north much of the swampy land along the Linau (Linawa) River was also settled by Mennonites.

In another part of the Large Werder, the "tenuta Bärwald," a region held by Reinhold Krokau in leasehold from the king, provided another opportunity for new settlement. This land, with its villages of Fürstenwerder (Żuławki), Bärwalde (Niedźwiedzica) and Neumünsterberg (Nowa Kościelnica), had also been devastated by the wars and floods, and so in the 1560s Krokau invited Netherlanders to restore his holdings to productivity. All three villages became important Mennonite centers. New villages, such as Vierzehnhuben (Zadwórze), were also established.

By the early part of the 17th century, most of the Large Werder had been restored or settled anew. The reclamation had been so successful that a French traveler, Charles Ogier, described the region as a "fertile garden."[17] Although dike breaks continued to threaten the development of parts of the werder, and over the years often produced great hardships for the settlers, they were always rebuilt and the land reclaimed. For the coming centuries, the Large Werder remained a major source of farm goods. Built upon the rich soil, the farm economy brought prosperity and economic stability to the region.

### Local Administration in the Large Werder

When the new settlers came, they were almost always given their land in long-term leases, usually valid for 30 to 40 years. On other occasions, they might acquire actual ownership under terms of the Kulm Code, an adaptation of the juridical system emanating from Magdeburg and serving as the

usual legal basis for defining relationships between settlers and local government. The system had been introduced by the Teutonic Knights and remained in force when the Knights were defeated.

Much of the land around Marienburg formed part of the Polish crown lands, but the king permitted new settlements to be founded and governed in accordance with the old code of laws established by the Knights. As the area was drained and as additional settlements came into being, a system of local administration arose that expressed the special circumstances of a society whose economic well-being was shaped by dikes and drainage patterns. The royal representative (Vogt or Starosta) presided over the administration of justice, while local economic policies were largely determined and executed by local officials. Some of the most prominent officials were charged with responsibility to protect the dikes *(Deichgeschworene)*.[18] Their titles reflected the crucial role played by the dikes. At the local community level, each village had its own *Schulze*, or administrator.

Early documents kept by some of the settlers reflect conditions as communities sprang up on both sides of the Nogat River. A contemporary account, later incorporated into the chronicle of the Orlofferfelde Mennonite Church, describes the beginning of the settlement:

> *Tiegenhof and its environs, before being settled by Mennonites, was largely a swampy, unusable area, covered with reeds and bushes. It had been leased from the Polish king by the brothers Hans, Simon and Stephen Loitz. These men hoped to improve their unusable land . . . . In 1562 Simon and Stephen Loitz, together with the latter's wife, Esther of Baasen, invited Mennonites from Holland and elsewhere. These made the larger and smaller islands [Werder] arable by building dams at the Haff, Lake Drausen, and downstream along the Vistula and the Nogat, as well as along the Tiege. They constructed watermills and dug drainage ditches, and thus made the swampy, unusable lowlands arable. In 1578 Hans Loitz the younger gained the Tiegenhof property by inheritance . . . . He now rented the reclaimed land for interest for thirty years to the invited Mennonites. Annually they paid 52 guilders and 13 chickens for each farmyard. . . .*[19]

The chronicle goes on to recount how later owners of the land continued to rent it to the Mennonites for periods of 20 to 40

years. Moreover, Mennonites were exempted from duties such as quartering troops and performing "Scharwerk," or corvee, the unpaid labor services often performed for landowners by tenants or serfs. The long-term tenancies were approved by successive Polish kings, beginning with Sigismund Augustus (1548-1572) and concluding with Stanisław Poniatowski (1764-1795).

Mennonite villages in the lowlands had gained a reputation for their productivity, efficiency and distinctive patterns. Long-term leases, designs of farm buildings, legal responsibilities, government structures—these all formed part of the image of the communities commonly referred to as "Holländereien" (in German) or "olędry" (in Polish). The term came to denote this specific type of farming population and was later applied to communities that conformed to this pattern, even if the inhabitants were not Netherlanders.

### The Lowlands in Transition

The first partition of Poland in 1772 brought the delta under the Prussian crown. The next century proved to be a time of cultural accommodation and religious tension as the designs of the Prussian state came into conflict with traditional values of the Mennonites. Sometimes, conflicting views could not be reconciled and stimulated emigration; usually, cultural accommodation carried the day.

Prussian seizure of this area coincided with Mennonite linguistic transition from Dutch to German. A confession of faith, published in Dutch in 1730, appeared in German in 1768. Despite changes in language, Mennonites in Prussia maintained strong ties with Holland.

Mennonites felt their way of life threatened when Prussian authorities began to restrict further acquisition of lands by Mennonites. Military obligations were tied to land; because Mennonites were exempt from military service, the Prussian king resolved to prevent any further erosion of support for his army. Mennonites responded to

**House-barn built and used by a Mennonite family until the end of World War II. The nearby Orlofferfelde cemetery still has a number of gravestones, including some of the prominent Donner family.**

the new policy by seeking land elsewhere. Many decided to accept an invitation from Tsarina Catherine II to settle on newly-acquired lands in South Russia. In July 1788 a large farewell celebration was held at the church in Rosenort as 152 families (919 persons) initiated the emigration to Russia. A momentous new chapter in Mennonite history had begun. For the next several decades hundreds of Mennonites from various parts of Prussia, but overwhelmingly from the delta, joined the exodus.

Another major challenge faced the Mennonites when exemption from military service was ended in 1867. Some Mennonites refused to accept this change and once again suggested emigration. Gerhard Penner, elder of the large Heubuden congregation, rejected the government demands, and led several hundred people to settle in the United States, while the elder of the Ladekopp congregation moved to Russia. In some churches, the issue of military service led to division or to removal of ministers from their offices. The new policy, however, also meant that restrictions on land acquisition were now removed, and gradually most Mennonites came to accept military service as an appropriate obligation of citizens. Centuries of pacifism ended as the powerful forces of Prussian nationalism and militarism, embodied in a dynamic culture, changed the character of Mennonite belief in this area. The Dutch Mennonites were being Prussianized.

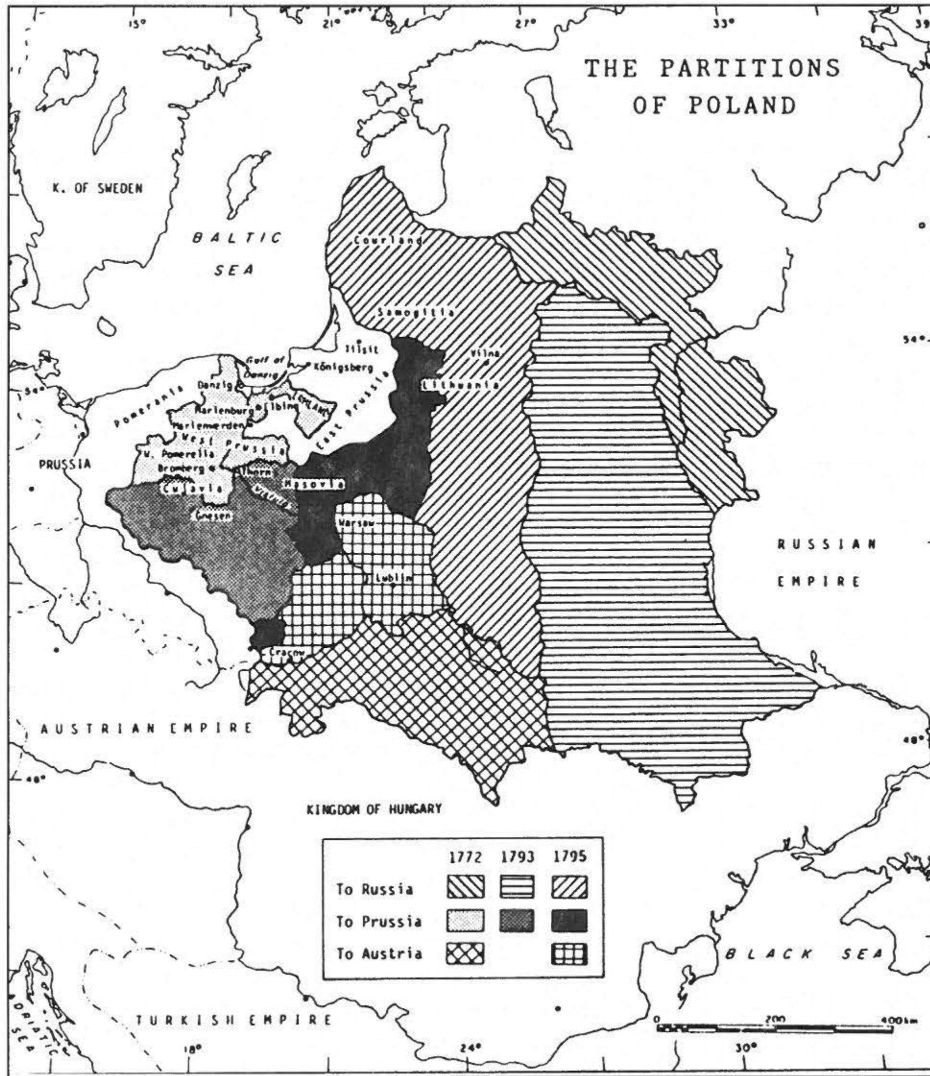
Later developments in Prussia, and in the larger German state, strengthened this historic change. By the end of the 19th century, most Mennonites in Prussian lands identified with most aspects of the dominant culture.

**Reminders of a Legacy**

Although the Dutch settlers in the Vistula-Nogat Delta long retained many of their cultural characteristics, gradually the centuries of living in a predominantly German society produced a large measure of assimilation. Nonetheless, the Mennonites retained their religious identity, and a number of congregations and church buildings formed part of the landscape.

Today, the congregations of the Large Werder are no more, for they were dispersed by the ravages of World War II. Some of the church buildings still stand and are in use today. The former Mennonite Church in Pr. Rosengart (Rozgart) serves the local Roman Catholic parish. The adjacent cemetery is desolate and overgrown with bushes and weeds. Just a few miles to the east, the former church building of the Mennonites in Thiensdorf (Jezioro), despite its fine red brick structure, is used as a storage building.

In the Large Werder, today known as


THE PARTITIONS OF POLAND
K. OF SWEDEN
BALTIC SEA
Courland
Samogitia
Tilsit
Königsberg
Vilna
Lithuania
Gulf of Danzig
Danzig
Pomerania
Marienburg
Elbing
East Prussia
Marienwerden
West Prussia
W. Pomerelia
Bromberg
Thorn
PRUSSIA
Masovia
Cujavia
Gnesen
Warsaw
Lublin
Cracow
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
AUSTRIAN EMPIRE
KINGDOM OF HUNGARY
1772
1793
1795
To Russia
To Prussia
To Austria
BLACK SEA
TURKISH EMPIRE
15°
21°
27°
33°
39°
18°
24°
30°
54°
48°
200
400km

Żuławy, no former Mennonite church building still serves its original purpose. In Bärwalde (Niedźwiedzica), the log structure built for a church in 1768 was used by the local collective farm as a storage shed until it was destroyed by fire in 1990. Although the former cemetery is largely gone, a number of gravestones have been set up neatly in the former churchyard. Also, the foundation of the former church provides a border for a neat lawn. Local residents welcome visitors to this historic site. Nearby, the local Roman Catholic parish has constructed a church. In Heubuden (Stogi), the Mennonite congregation constructed a large church in 1768; it is gone, but the adjacent cemetery still has many headstones with legible inscriptions. The impressive wrought iron gate to the cemetery has been restored.

Former Mennonite church buildings in Ladekopp (Lubieszewo), Orlofferfelde (Orłowskie Pole), Rosenort (Rożewo—not to be confused with another Rosenort), and Tlegenhagen (Cyganek ) no longer exist. Similarly, the former Mennonite chapel at Neunhuben (Dziewięc Włok) is gone. A the same time, local Poles, as well as visitors from United States, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, have worked together to restore numerous cemeteries and to keep them presentable. Funds have been gathered to support and expand the museum in Nowy Dwór, especially aspects of the Mennonite story. Also, a historical park in Cyganek (near the former Tiegenhagen), still in construction, has a house built in the style of earlier Mennonite homes; in addition, gravestones from various overgrown and neglected Mennonite cemeteries, as well as historic artifacts, have been gathered here.

Many of the villages that dot Żuławy, however, still have houses built by Mennonite settlers. A good number of the distinctive arcaded houses, many of them under government protection as historical buildings, can be seen throughout the lowlands. In many instances, carefully-carved capitals on wooden columns reflect the care and

**Almost all windmills that once dotted the landscape in the Vistula-Nogat Delta have disappeared. This one, situated in Wikrowo (Wickerau) immediately south of the Ellerwald area, was used for milling. Fire destroyed this landmark in 2002.**

artistry that shaped regional architectural design. Also, the name of the "Baumeister," the building master, is often carved on the lintel above the door.

Much of the Żuławy must be drained regularly to remain productive. The extensive drainage system, built over the centuries, still serves its original purpose. Also, many good roads have been constructed since World War II and allow the visitor to reach destinations quickly. Many of the smaller villages can still be reached by traveling along the traditional cobblestone roads, picturesquely lined by trees.

For centuries, Marienburg (Malbork) served as an important administrative center for the area. When this region was seized by Prussia in 1772, Mennonite leaders went to persuade Frederick II to grant them their traditional privileges and rights. Gradually a Mennonite congregation arose in and around the city, and in 1906, this group, together with the large Heubuden congregation constructed a church building here. Following World War II the structure was used as a cinema, then removed to make room for new city projects.

Today, Malbork and its adjacent lowlands still constitute one of the most productive agricultural areas of Poland. The network of canals, dikes and ditches; the carefully-planned, tree-lined roads; the arcaded houses and the remaining church structures are reminders of an era of prosperity and rural tranquility. Some of the old farming traditions still survive. At the same time, demographic change and modern technology have given rise to a new order.

**Arcaded houses still form part of the landscape in many villages in the delta. A plate on the house indicates that the building is under protection as a historical structure.**

# III

# SETTLEMENTS ALONG THE VISTULA

Soon after Netherlanders had begun their economically successful settlement in the Vistula-Nogat Delta, they were invited to continue land reclamation and development to the south, up the Vistula. Low-lying areas around Mewe (Gniew), Marienwerder (Kwidzyn), Neuenburg (Nowe), Graudenz (Grudziądz), Schwetz (Świecie) and Kulm (Chełmno) attracted settlers when local rulers decided that nonconformists could be tolerated. Even earlier, some Anabaptists from South Germany and Moravia had come to Przechówka near Schwetz and to some lowlands on the other side of the Vistula, where villages such as Schönsee were founded. The precise date of these beginnings cannot be ascertained; it appears to have been in the 1540s. Soon other settlers came from the delta. Contemporary local government documents refer to both kinds of settlers as "Hollanders," thus indicating that the type of villages established here were those of persons who had brought skills in draining marshes and in developing certain agricultural patterns.

The new settlers wrested their land from the river and soon established a thriving cattle and dairy economy. In addition, they were permitted to carry on many of their traditional crafts, despite objections from guilds in the larger towns.[20]

**Near Marienwerder (Kwidzyn)**

Although the region of the Marienwerder lowlands constitutes a geographic unity, it was divided into three parts by the Peace of Thorn. The southern extremity formed part of the kingdom of Poland. The Teutonic Order retained the middle section, while the northern part also became part of the kingdom of Poland. Shortly after the secularization of the territories of the Order and adoption of Lutheranism in ducal Prussia, Duke Albert served notice that he would not permit "heretics" to live in his lands. Mennonites soon discovered that if they wished to reside along the Vistula, it would have to be in territories subject to the crown of Poland.

In the northern parts of the Marienwerder lowlands, villages settled largely or entirely by Mennonites included commu-

nities such as Schulwiese, Küche, Tragheimerweide and Montauerweide. Later, following a period of some toleration in Ducal Prussia, Mennonites were again expelled from that duchy in 1724 and came to villages in the Marienwerder area. By now, Prussia had become a kingdom, and the new ruler was actively recruiting tall men for his armies. Villages such as Zwanzigerweide, Schweingrube, Gross and Kleinschardau, and Rudnerweide became the new homes of the dispossessed from Prussia. The emigrants were determined not to be inducted into the king's "Potsdam Riesengarde."[21]

As Mennonite settlers continued to come to the northern part of the Marienwerder lowlands, swamps and bushland were brought under cultivation as the newcomers applied their techniques and skills. Land was leased for periods of thirty or forty years, so that settlers were assured a measure of security. In addition, in 1728 the Bishop of Kulm, Felix Ignatius Kretkowski, granted the Mennonites permission to build a church.[22]

**Near Montau (Mątawy)**

Economic expectations were clearly a major factor in persuading local officials to invite these Hollanders to come to this area. Reports issued by some officials state that they were confident that if this area could be farmed by methods similar to those used in the delta, the income for the royal coffers would be more than doubled. Thus, in one of the earlier settlements along the Vistula, royal lands in the vicinity of Montau (Mątawy) were made available to Netherlanders, and a substantial community arose here along the west bank. In 1569 King Sigismund Augustus confirmed a lease agreement whereby the Mennonites were granted exemption from various services on condition that they would make a money payment of 1400 marks.

The first such agreement, drawn up for a period of twelve years, included a group of 18 Hollanders. At the expiration of the agreement, it was extended for another 18 years. Polish authorities, who owned the land, were well-pleased with the arrangement, for the contract explained that previously "the land and village Montau was desolate, and brought little or no profit"; now the land through the "industry, care and hard work" of the settlers, had become productive.[23] The introduction of successful farming methods also permitted local landlords to increase rents substantially. In addition, Mennonite settlers were permitted to sell their goods along the Vistula.

Settlers in the Montau area enjoyed a large measure of religious liberty. As early as 1586 they had their own church building in Montau.[24]

Lease agreements tended to be written

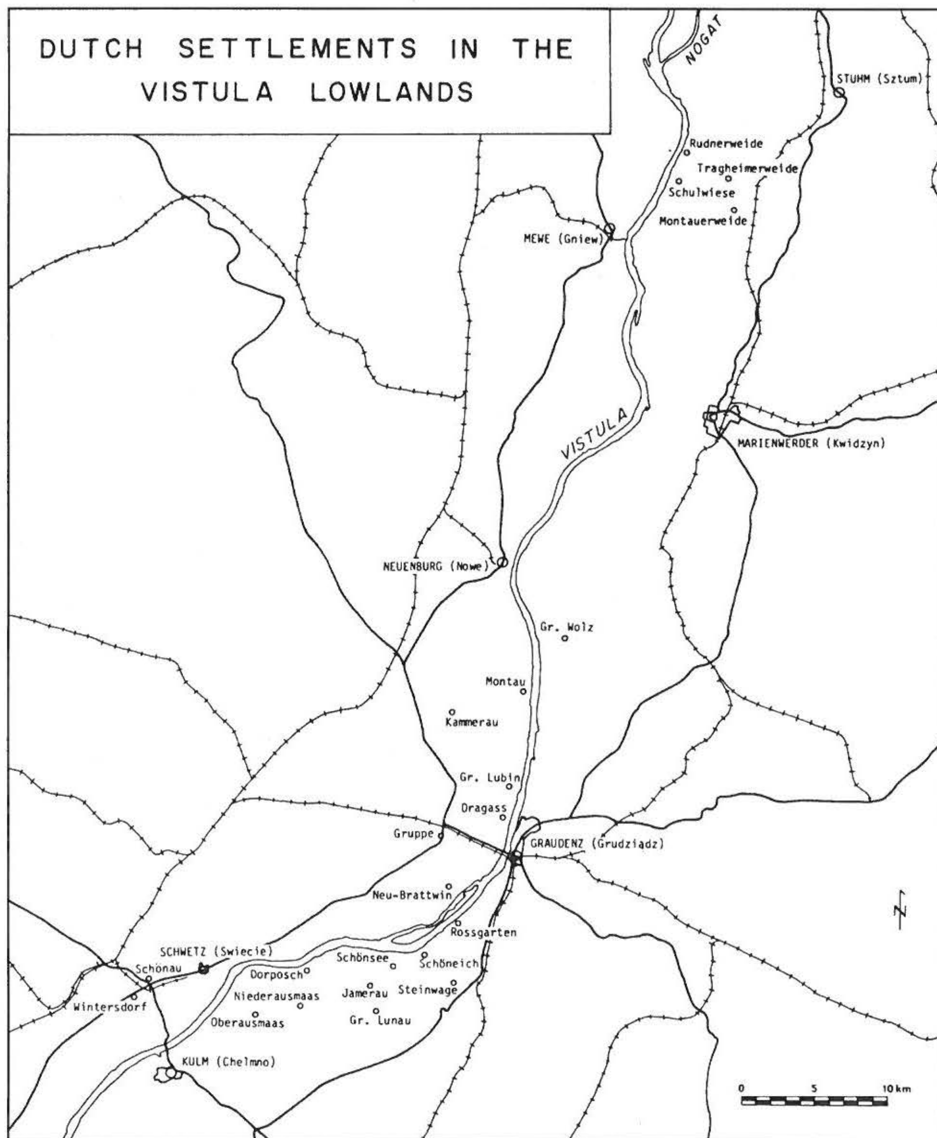
for several decades and might involve payments in kind or money, as well as a variety of services. A declaration made by a landowner in Montau in 1636 is illustrative. The lessor, Teresa of Konarzyny, stated that she had leased her Montau land "for fifty years to the Hollanders." They agreed to pay her 1600 Polish złotys annually, together with ten hams. The settlers were granted their "freedoms," exemptions from the corvee, the right to sell their crops "everywhere," as well as some other rights. The agreement stipulated that the entire community must meet its obligations as a unit. Payments were to be made "all for everyone, and everyone for all."[25]

Soon more villages appeared along the Vistula. Some of those founded near Montau in the 16th or early 17th centuries included Dragass ( 1592 ) (Dragacz), Gross Lubin (1583) (Wielki Lubień). Klein Lubin (1593) (Mały Lubień), Kamerau (ca. 1570-80) (Kamirowo), and Gruppe (1604) (Grupa). These newly established villages soon developed programs of mutual support and, in so doing, laid the basis for a number of cooperative ventures. In 1605, 21 representatives from eight villages in the Gruppe-Montau area agreed to implement proposals to clean out and maintain the little Montau stream. Most of the participants were Mennonites, who took a leading role in introducing systematic flood control to the Montau on the left bank of the Vistula.[26]

During the two Swedish wars, this area suffered severe hardship and devastation. Many of the homes were plundered, so that inhabitants were unable to pay for their use of the lands. Resulting disputes between landlord and tenant led King John Casimir to appoint a commission to resolve the issue. Joint efforts by the tenants allowed them to make an adequate money payment and thus retain their rights and freedoms. Similar problems were forcing Polish farmers into serfdom; Mennonites had found a solution in mutual aid.[27]

Economic problems continued to plague the settlements in Montau and its vicinity. During the 1660s and 1670s, the Vistula on several occasions broke through the dikes and brought destruction to several of the villages. In 1677 King John Sobieski freed the settlements from some of their obligations so that they might have a better opportunity to recover. Soon, additional problems arose as the Northern War (1700-1721) brought devastation and depopulation as Swedish, Russian, Saxon and Polish troops marched through the area. Nonetheless, the times of trouble were followed by times of recovery and growth, so that the settlements continued to develop.

Conditions in Montau tended to be reflected in other nearby villages. In the latter part of the 16th century Mennonites estab-


DUTCH SETTLEMENTS IN THE VISTULA LOWLANDS
NOGAT
STUHM (Sztum)
Rudnerweide
Tragheimerweide
Schulwiese
Montauerweide
MEWE (Gniew)
VISTULA
MARIENWERDER (Kwidzyn)
NEUENBURG (Nowe)
Gr. Wolz
Montau
Kammerau
Gr. Lubin
Dragass
Gruppe
GRAUDENZ (Grudziądz)
Neu-Brattwin
Rossgarten
SCHWETZ (Swiecie)
Schönau
Schönsee
Schöneich
Dorposch
Niederausmaas
Jamerau
Steinwage
Wintersdorf
Oberausmaas
Gr. Lunau
KULM (Chelmno)
0
5
10 km

lished the village of Klein Sanskau on land granted them in long-term tenure. In 1592 this lease was extended for forty years for an annual rent of 350 guilders. The arrangement must have proved mutually satisfactory, for it was continued throughout the 17th and 18th centuries until the area was taken by Prussia in the first partition of Poland. The last tenancy agreement, signed by Countess Theofila Potocka in 1732, called for a lease of 50 years with an annual payment of 450 guilders and six hams.[28]

Just a few kilometers south of Sanskau was the older village, Gross Sanskau, where Mennonites also settled, although they formed only part of the larger community. Here, too, land was held in long-term leases, with annual money and in-kind payments to the landlord.

Mennonites also settled in the nearby villages of Gross Lubin and Dragass, although the precise date of settlement is not known. In 1583 Bishop Rozrazewski issued a visitation report in which he complained of Hollanders living in Lubin.[29] The local administrator, the castellan Jan Zborowski (in office from 1581 until his death in 1603), noting that Gross Lubin and neighboring lands were "totally flooded and unproductive, made desolate and ruined in the war," decided to lease the land to Hollanders. The terms called for a rent of 1087 guilders for a period of 50 years. Sigismund III granted inhabitants of Dragass, Gross and Klein Lubin, as well as several other nearby villages the right of shipping and selling their goods along the Vistula.[30] Clearly, officials were pleased with the results of their colonization policies, for in 1640, the local steward extended the lease for another 50 years. Evidently the king shared this generally positive attitude toward the settlers, for in the middle of the 17th century John Casimir issued a proclamation declaring that "Hollanders" in the "Graudenz staraster" were no longer to be subjected to the quartering of troops and the imposition of special taxes by local authorities.[31]

Several other villages in this area emerged in the 16th century as places where Mennonite farmers were welcome. Brattwin, Deutsch Westfalen (Małe Stwolno), and some other settlements were leased to Hollanders, although the extent to which these comprised Mennonites is uncertain. In 1593 King Sigismund III approved the settlement of farmers in this area. Half a century later, the local royal administrator, Jan Zawadzki, extended the lease; once again, royal approval followed.[32]

Mennonite villages continued to develop in this region throughout the period of Polish rule. Thus, in 1745 seven Mennonite families bought and settled Neunhuben. Later King Stanisław Augustus ratified the acquisition. Repeatedly, Polish kings and

their officials demonstrated a readiness to permit Mennonite settlement on crown lands. The Polish monarchy indeed established Poland as a haven for the oppressed and homeless.

In addition to their settlements on crown lands, Mennonites also established villages on lands belonging to the nobility and the Catholic Church. In Gruppe, "swampy land"[33] owned by the nobleman, Felix Konarski, was leased to Mennonites for 50 years (1604-1654). The new settlers were permitted to cut wood, fish in the lord's streams, and sell their products along the Vistula. They were also granted local civil administrative authority, as well as religious toleration. In 1625 the voivode of Marienburg, Samuel Zalinski, who also owned land in Gruppe, leased "land and bush," as the contemporary chronicler described the area, to Hollanders. Later, more land was leased specifically to Mennonites and other settlers. These new communities gradually emerged as Ober- and Niedergruppe. Most of the leased land here was held in tenure for periods of 40 to 50 years. Settlers agreed to fixed rents, as well as specified conditions, such as grinding grain only at the lord's mill and buying beer only from the lord's brewery.

Soon after this area was taken by Prussia in 1772, the farmers found that their rent had been increased from 49 to 136 Taler. By this time, farms in Ober- and Niedergruppe were held almost exclusively by Mennonites.[34] Like many other communities, they found that the new regime was much less open to compromise and accommodation than the old one had been.

Earlier, in the nearby village of Kommorsk (Komorsk), the Bishop of Włocławek granted "industrious Hollanders"[35] settlement privileges during the 17th century. By the 1720s, however, the local climate had changed. Some of the neighboring Poles charged that heretics, commonly called Hollanders,[36] had wrongly acquired land. In this instance, the bishop's court declared that the Mennonites would have to leave, although they were to be compensated for the homes and canals they had constructed. A later agreement between the bishop and new settlers in the area stipulated that land was to be rented only to Catholics. In a similar vein, the bishop announced that in the village Schottland, where his predecessors had invited Mennonites to settle, he was replacing all Mennonite public officials with Catholics. The winds of toleration did not always blow with even strength.

### In the Schwetz (Świecie) Area

Just south of Schwetz, in the lowlands on the left side of the Vistula, Mennonites from Groningen settled perhaps as early as 1540. Centered in the village Wintersdorf

(Przechówka), they maintained close ties with Flemish congregations in Holland until well into the 18th century. Here, too, land was held in long-term tenure. Thus, a lease agreement issued by the administrator (starosta) in Schwetz, Jan Zawadzki, in 1642 specified terms for 50 years. The last such agreement was issued for Wintersdorf by the then starosta Johanna Jablonowski. Confirmed by King Augustus III in 1742, it indicated that terms had remained constant for a century.

Mennonites also settled in neighboring villages such as Schönau (Przechowo), Glugowka, Christfelde (Chrystkowo) and Kossowo (Kosowo). Lease agreements, because they were made with various owners, tended to vary slightly, but generally included specified annual money payments. religious toleration, and local civil administrative authority. In some cases, settlers received permission to establish and operate their own schools. Farm produce could be sold in Danzig and elsewhere, while linen weaving could be used to supplement other income.

Early in the 18th century Mennonites in the Schwetz lowlands established a daughter settlement in nearby Kleinsee (Jeziorka). The owner of the land Hedwig von Steffens-Wybczynski, determined to undo the adverse effects of war devastation, granted a 40-year lease to Mennonites who now provided the agricultural skills necessary to transform the land into productive farms. Once again, Mennonites were granted religious toleration, provided they would pay parish dues to the Catholic church.[37]

**In the Kulm (Chełmno) and Graudenz (Grudziądz) Lowlands**

In 1553 King Sigismund II permitted Hollanders to settle in the Kulm lowlands.[38] Soon thereafter, the first Mennonite community in this area emerged at Schönsee (Sosnówka). This village now became the center of a substantial Mennonite settlement in this region. The local Catholic bishop, who had jurisdiction over the land and made it available to settlers, was pleased to see his marshes transformed into productive farms, and so he permitted religious toleration. Skill in draining swamps, building dikes, raising cattle and producing good crops made the Mennonites welcome residents. By the early 17th century, villages such as Rossgarten (Rozgarty), Lunau (Lunawy), Ober and Niederausmaas (Dolne and Górne Wymiary), Grenz (Granica) and Dorposch (Dorposz) provided homes for numerous Mennonites.

Details of earliest arrangements between the settlers and the landowner are difficult to determine, nonetheless, the second lease arranged between the city council of Kulm and the Mennonite settlers in

Schönsee, dated September 26, 1565, provides some insights into mutual obligations.[39] The city retained ownership of the land and ultimate judicial authority, Lessees were required to market their produce in Kulm; only if the city could not absorb all of the goods could they be sold elsewhere.

Competition with Kulm merchants was specifically forbidden; only local village needs could be supplied by the Mennonite craftsmen. Settlers were also permitted limited other rights, such as fishing in local streams. Most importantly, Mennonites were granted the right to practice their religion freely. Similar leases were signed in later years.[40]

Sometimes, privileges were expanded. Thus, in 1670 local authorities permitted Mennonites to establish their own school. In addition, Mennonites developed their own local civil administration, with the understanding that such developments must reflect city administration guidelines.

Like Schönsee, the nearby village of Jamerau also had a number of Mennonite settlers in the 16th century. Lease agreements were similar to those made between Kulm and Schönsee, although in this case no reference was made to schools. Another nearby village, Gross Lunau (Wielkie Lunawy), also emerged as a Mennonite center at about this time. The local bishop, Laurentius Gembicki, permitted the city of Kulm to lease land to the Mennonites provided that they would not build "strange churches"[41] or spread non-Catholic teaching. In a later lease agreement (1664), Mennonites were permitted to build their own school and appoint their own teachers.

In the early 17th century, the Mennonites near Kulm built a church at Schönsee. A century later, around 1725, they organized a fire insurance association that was destined to become a major public welfare institution among Mennonites along the Vistula. Other villages in the area also came to be predominantly Mennonite. Together, these educational efforts, religious activities centered in the Schönsee church, and various mutual aid practices, especially in instances of property loss by fire or flooding, formed an important aspect of community life.

Over the decades, and with the intensification of the Counter-Reformation, the leniency toward "heretics" sometimes came under fire. In the latter part of the 17th century, complaints that Mennonites paid no money for masses, or insistence that no religions other than Catholicism or Lutheranism should be tolerated, eventually drove Mennonites from some villages near Kulm. Sometimes, changing political structures also created problems for the Mennonites.

# SETTLEMENTS ALONG THE VISTULA

The Peace of Thorn (1466) had given some of the Kulm lowlands to the King of Poland, while others were retained by the Teutonic Knights, and thus formed part of the later duchy of Prussia. As Lutheranism established itself throughout the duchy, Mennonites were forced to leave those areas. Often, they found a new home in a nearby village that formed part of the crown lands, and that enjoyed greater religious toleration. During most of the 16th and 17th centuries, diversity of administration within Polish lands along the Vistula provided homes and opportunities for those who had become victims of religious intolerance.

During the 18th century, Mennonites in the Kulm area sometimes were subjected to pressure to abandon their religious distinctives. On a number of occasions, as in 1732 and 1733, they made special money payments to be able to retain their privileges. Gradually, however, Mennonites around Kulm came to enjoy the same measure of toleration as those living in the Vistula Delta. Here sweeping royal edicts of toleration had brought relief to Mennonites earlier. Later, in 1772, when Prussia seized part of Poland, including Kulm, Mennonites were able to retain briefly their religious privileges, including exemption from military service, by paying 5000 Thaler annually. Very soon, however, the rigorous policies of the emerging Prussian state created problems for the Mennonite community.

Settlement in the Graudenz (Grudziądz) area paralleled that near Kulm. In the second half of the 16th century, settlers from Holland began to establish themselves in the Graudenz lowlands. Some of this land had been drained and farmed earlier, but the vicissitudes of war, coupled with prolonged neglect, had reduced much of the area to swamps and brushland, so that now it had to be reclaimed from the river. By 1579, Mennonites were reported in Wolz, although a document issued by King Sigismund III in 1604, outlining various trading rights on the Vistula, suggests that settlers from the Netherlands had come to this area earlier, perhaps in 1564.[42] The royal "privilege" stated that the settlers were to sell their grain and other farm products "by water and by land, in any place they may choose. . . ."[43] Soon thereafter, Netherlanders restored the villages of Tusch (1604) and Parsken (Parsk) (1618), and others. Once again, lowlands along the river became productive farm lands.

### In the Thorn (Toruń) Vicinity

Thorn (Toruń) marked the most southerly area conquered and settled by the Teutonic Knights. Founded by the Knights in 1231, the city became a strongly fortified outpost of the Knights' authority; at the

same time, its ties to the Hansa gave it an important commercial role. The Polish crown regained control when the Knights were defeated, but the close ties to Baltic trade via the Vistula remained. At the same time, the colonists, mostly German, who had established the city as a center of trade, also remained. It was they who controlled city government.

When the reformation came to Poland, many of the important commercial centers, including Thorn, proved very receptive. Despite vigorous opposition by the king and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Lutheranism gained a strong following in the cities and also among members of the aristocracy. Then, when Calvinism began to spread in Poland, the old order found itself under difficult circumstances. The strength of the new movements was demonstrated when the Polish Parliament, the Sejm, chose a Protestant as its president. At the same time, other forms of dissent, such as Anabaptism and Socinianism, also made their appearance. The masses of the population, however, remained largely loyal to the traditional faith.

In Thorn, the city council supported the growth of Protestantism, although the Catholic faith always retained some churches in the city. Not until well into the 18th century was the Catholic Church restored to its position of dominance; thus, for almost two centuries, most of the churches of Thorn were Protestant, and the city council espoused that position. As the city became increasingly Protestant, opponents denounced it as a center of heresy. The city council, of course, rejected such assertions, and tried to make sure that movements viewed as heretical by both Catholics and Lutherans, such as the Anabaptists, were excluded from the city.

It is thus not surprising that early attempts by Anabaptists to gain a foothold in the city were vigorously resisted. Nonetheless, because the long struggle between the Knights and the King of Poland had devastated some of the lands near Thorn, the city tried to make these lands more productive by inviting new settlers to the area. By 1574, a number of Mennonites were settled on lands held in long-term leases from the city, north of the Vistula in Old Thorn. When charges of harboring heretics were leveled against the city, the council decided to change its policy. When leases expired in 1594, the Mennonites were compelled to leave.[44] Similarly, Lutheran religious leaders urged the king not to tolerate heretics such as Anabaptists and Arians. In 1605 the city council decreed that "no sectarians, and religious counterfeiters, such as Arians, Anabaptists and others like them" should be permitted to settle on lands belonging to Thorn.[45]

## SETTLEMENTS ALONG THE VISTULA

Fortunately for the Mennonites, local lords usually determined religious policy on their lands. Once again, economic considerations proved decisive. The administrator (starosta) of Dybów, on the south side of the river, invited Hollanders to come to his flooded, marshy lands in Grossnessau and Obernessau (Wielka Nieszawka), This small territory, part of the royal domain, had long attempted to remain economically independent of the commercial interests in Thorn.[46] Indeed, tensions persisted until Prussia seized this area in 1772.

The settlement remained small, however, and never enjoyed prosperity comparable to that experienced in the Vistula Delta. Progress was slow and difficult. Eventually, in 1778 the Mennonites built their own church. The structure burned when it was hit by lightning in 1889. In the following year, though, a new building was dedicated. The congregation here also established its own school.[47]

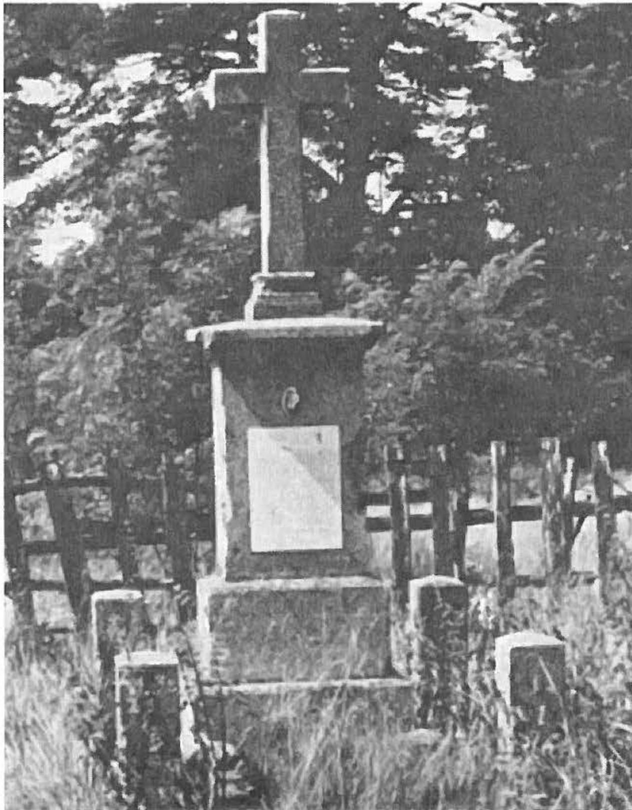
In the late 18th century this area and other regions in Prussia were profoundly affected as hundreds of Mennonites accepted an invitation from Catherine the Great to settle in newly acquired territories in South Russia. Some also left Obernessau in the Russian migration. Then, early in the 19th century, others left for America, so that the size of the Mennonite congregation always remained small. In addition, a number of attempts to contain the Vistula by building a series of dikes proved only partially successful, so that the Mennonite farms were repeatedly flooded. Under these circumstances Mennonite congregations elsewhere often sent funds to help the Obernessau settlers. Letters sent to the Hamburg church in 1884 and 1885 reflect the difficulties faced by farmers whose lands were often flooded. Money from Hamburg and other relatively prosperous Mennonite churches enabled the Obernessau church to survive.[48] Eventually, however, only a handful of families decided to stay in order to make a living in this challenging setting.

With the partitions of Poland, Thorn and its environs fell under the Prussian crown. Then, when the Versailles peace treaties re-established the state of Poland, Thorn, now Toruń, became an important commercial center for the new country. Mennonites along the Vistula found themselves in a situation where a religious community had been geographically divided by the fortunes of war. Some of the lands along the Vistula formed part of the state of Poland; other areas were now in the Danzig Free State or in (German) Prussia. Despite such political divisions, the various communities remained in close contact, and retained a measure of unity.

### Along the Middle Vistula

Shortly after the middle of the 18th century, several groups of Mennonites, from Obernessau and elsewhere, established colonies along the Vistula between Thorn and Warsaw. Two villages, Deutsch Wymyśle and Deutsch Kazuń, emerged as centers of the new settlements, although Mennonites also settled in small numbers of scattered communities in this vicinity.

Deutsch Wymyśle Cemetery.



### Deutsch Wymyśle (today Nowe Wymyśle)

The earliest date of Mennonite settlement in the area is difficult to determine. Some records state that in 1764 some families from Przechówka settled in Wymyśle, and soon other families, from Royal Prussia and elsewhere, joined them. For some families, Wymyśle was little more than a short stop, however, as emigration to Russia became common in many areas along the Vistula after 1788.

Settlers in Deutsch Wymyśle built a church and a school, but in the 1850s fire destroyed the school, and so, a new school was soon built. Similarly, in 1864 the congregation was able to dedicate a new church.

Following the re-establishment of Poland after the first World War, Wymyśle, situated in the new nation, experienced various tensions associated with living as a small minority in a new society increasingly aware of nationalistic and ethnic ties. Nonetheless, relatively good relations between Mennonites and their Polish neighbors continued until World War II. It is worth noting that after this part of Poland had been occupied by German troops in September 1939, Mennonites found that

their earlier liberties had been substantially reduced.[49] Then in 1945, in the upheaval of the latter stages of the war, this congregation, like other Mennonite communities in the reconstructed state of Poland, ceased to exist as inhabitants fled before the advancing Soviet army.

**Deutsch Kazuń (today a suburb of Kazuń)**

By the middle of the 18th century, a number of Hollanders had found new homes along the Vistula, near Kazuń. Sometimes, names indicated the ethnic origin of the settlers, as in Dembina-Holland. Usually, however, the newcomers formed part of existing villages. Deutsch Kazuń became a center for the emerging Mennonite community, especially when some 23 families in the 1750s acquired land in the lowlands just across the Vistula from the town of Modlin. Here on swamp land, the village of Deutsch Kazuń came into being. Once again, the Dutch skill in combating floods through dikes and drainage systems helped to bring fertile Vistula low-lying land under cultivation. Soon a number of Mennonites could be found in numerous villages in the area. The lowlands along the Vistula here were known as the "Dutch" area.

During much of the 19th century, numerous settlers passed through this area on their way to new opportunities in South Russia. Following the Congress of Vienna, that part of Poland where Deutsch Kazuń was situated fell to the Russian crown, and so transfer to other parts of the Tsarist empire became relatively easy. Nevertheless, new Mennonite communities, as at Wola-Wodzińska, continued to arise, even as some families migrated to Russia or to America. Mennonites in Deutsch Kazuń constructed a building that served as both church and school. Today it is used as a private residence.

**The Peace of Versailles and the Vistula Settlements**

With the Peace of Versailles, Mennonite communities in Poland and Prussia fell under three jurisdictions. Danzig, with its lowlands, as well as the delta, formed the Danzig Free State; the vast majority of Mennonites of the Vistula region lived here. Congregations included those of Danzig, Neunhuben, Fürstenwerder, Heubuden, Ladekopp, Orlofferfelde, Rosenort and Tiegenhagen. Settlements east of the Nogat remained under Prussian (German) rule and included the congregations of Elbing, Elbing Ellerwald, Thiensdorf-Marcushof, Preussisch Rosengart, Marienburg and Tragheimerweide. On the other hand, congregations along the Vistula between the delta and Warsaw—those in Schönsee, Montau, Gruppe, Toruń, Deutsch Wymyśle

and Deutsch Kazuń—were now in the new Polish state. Similarly, the small congregation in Lemberg (Lvov), once in the Austrian Empire, was also under Polish rule.

For many of the Mennonites along the Vistula, the years between Versailles and the outbreak of World War II were times of uncertainty and tension. Although relations between Poles and Mennonites had been relatively cordial for centuries, the new political and national realities, accentuated by ethnic, linguistic and religious differences, often obscured the fact that Mennonites owed much to earlier Polish rulers and policies. Meanwhile, the new Polish state, born in a surge of national and cultural pride, tended to emphasize Polish distinctives. It should be noted, however, that Mennonites were granted broad liberties, including exemption from active military service. They were also permitted to retain close ties with their co-religionists in the Danzig Free State and in East Prussia. Similarly, they maintained their German language and culture. As Polish-German tensions mounted in the later 1930s, some Poles looked askance at all groups in Poland that insisted on nurturing their German ties and traditions. As World War II began, propaganda quickly created an atmosphere of suspicion and fear that in turn nurtured violence and injustice. Centuries of cooperation and good will fell prey to forces of war and nationalism.

**Echoes of the Past**

Today, the once flourishing Mennonite settlements in the valley of the Vistula are home to thousands of Poles, many of whom have come from parts of Poland seized by the Soviet Union, either during or after World War II. Following World War I, this territory formed part of the re-established state of Poland. For two decades, some political and social adjustments became a necessary factor in everyday life as Polish rule replaced the former German authorities. Mennonite churches were permitted to retain their own culture, language and religion. At the same time, they kept up close contact with their fellow-believers in the delta (a region incorporated into the Danzig Free State by the Versailles peace treaties) and in East Prussia. The latter area, by the terms of the peace treaties, had been separated from the rest of Germany.

Houses, churches, cemeteries and drainage systems remind the visitor of a legacy left by the departing Mennonites. A number of former Mennonite churches now serve Catholic and Protestant congregations; in a number of instances, church buildings fell victim to the ravages of war, both in the Vistula Delta and up the river, as in Tragheimerweide, Gruppe (Grupa), and Schönsee (Sosnówka). A number of the large log houses, built by Mennonites two centuries ago, are still well preserved, as are

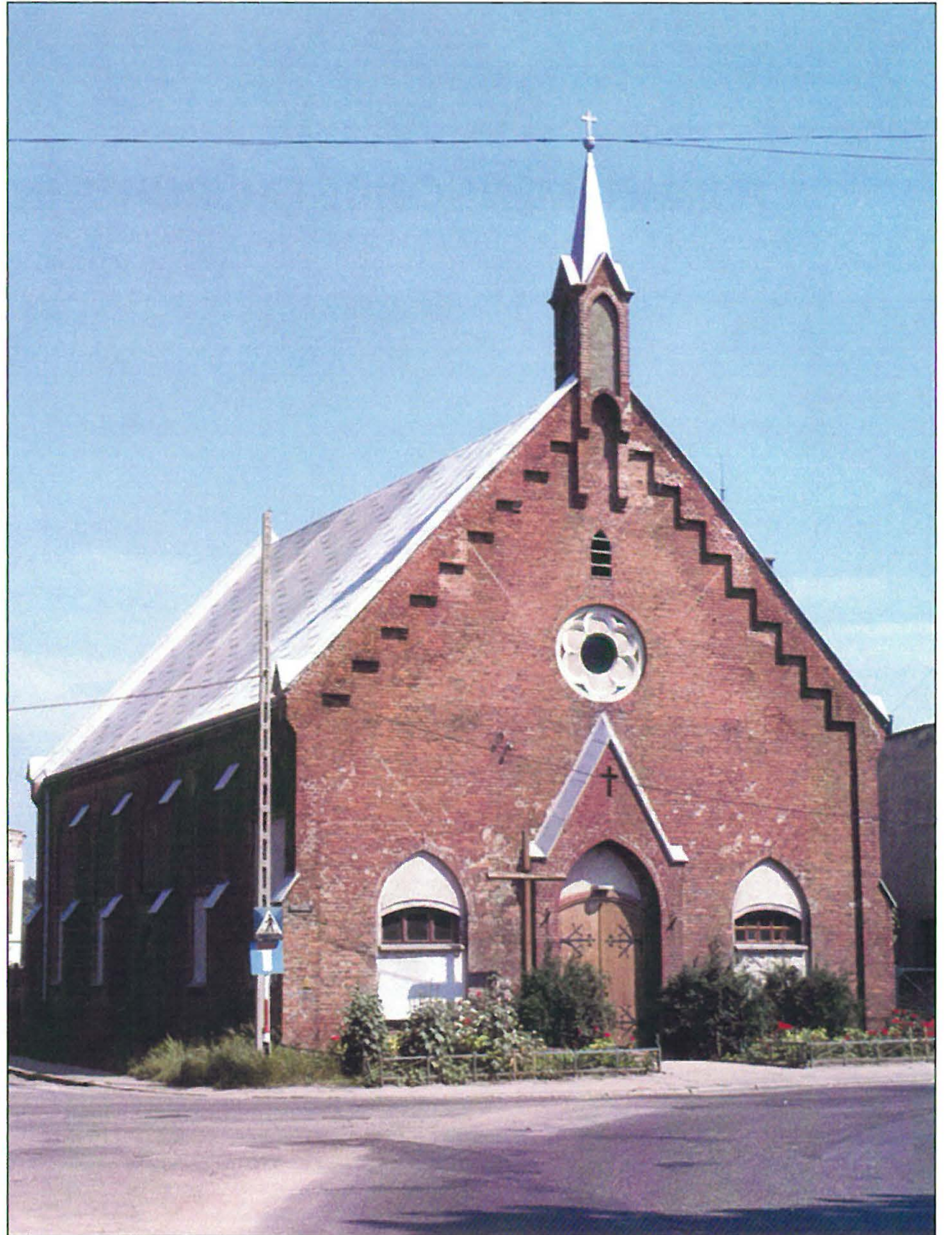
numerous other former Mennonite homes and farms. Other former Mennonite churches now serve as storage places or homes, as in Nowe Kasun. The observant visitor will find many evidences of an important Mennonite earlier presence. Equally important, many current inhabitants of places once home to Mennonites will extend a warm welcome to those whose families once lived in the scenic and historic lands along the Vistula.

# IV

# FORMER MENNONITE CHURCHES IN POLAND

The former United Flemish and Frisian Mennonite church in Gdańsk.
Today, a Pentecostal congregation worships there.

52

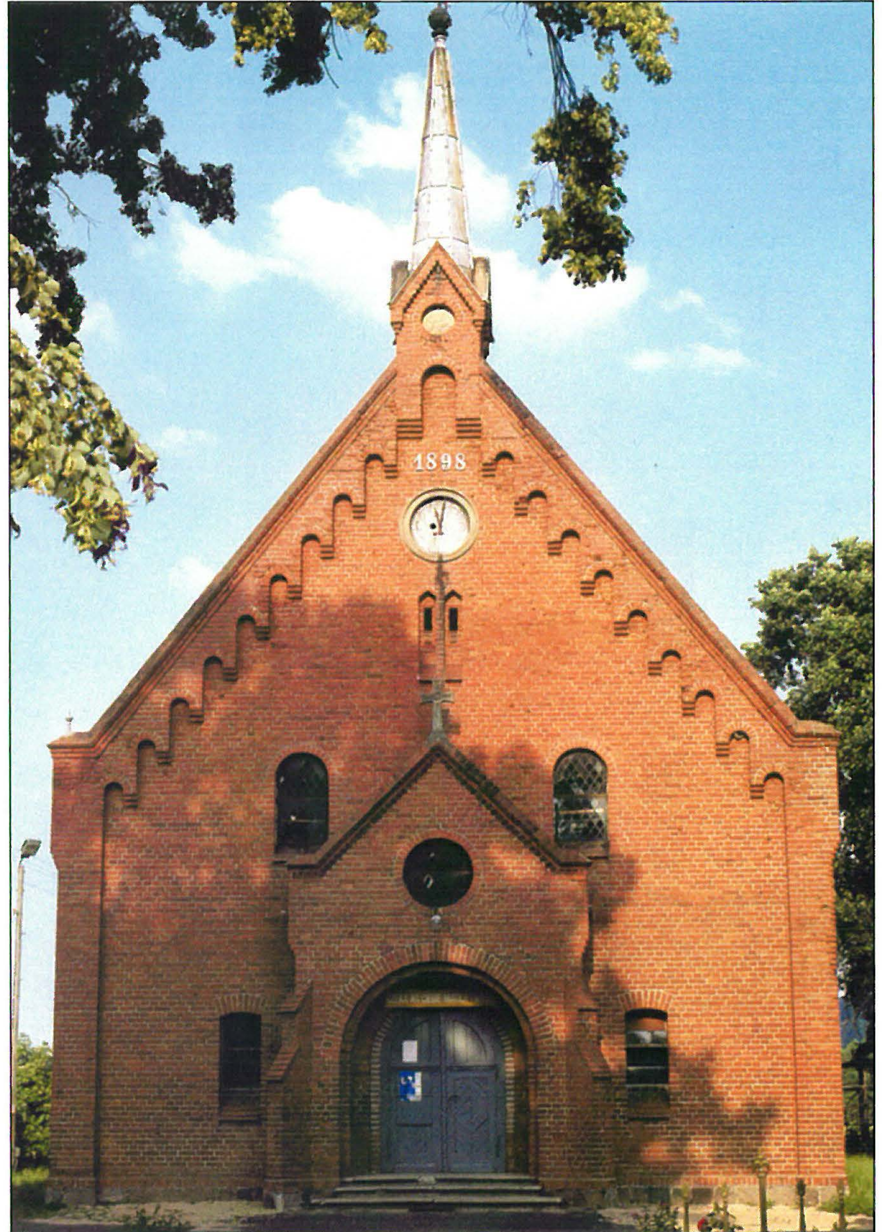


In 1590, the first Mennonite church building in the Vistula-Nogat Delta was built in the city of Elbing. The present structure was built in 1900 and served the local congregation until 1945. Today it serves a National Polish Catholic parish.

This church, built in 1768, situated at the north end of the village of Bärwalde (now Niedźwiedzica), served the Fürstenwerder congregation. The church was destroyed by fire in 1990.

**Some of the former Mennonite churches on the lowlands near Elbląg still stand. The church in Rozgart (once Preussisch Rosengart) now serves a Catholic parish. The beautiful gate to the cemetery has been restored.**

**In Jezioro (formerly Thiensdorf) the building that was once used by the local Mennonite congregation is now a storage building. Local residents have suggested that the church become a museum of local Mennonite history.**




This former Mennonite Church in Mątawy (formerly Montau) now is used by the local Catholic parish.

The former Mennonite Church in Nieszawka (Obernessau) today serves a small Catholic parish. The building is situated on the south side of the Vistula River, about 4 kilometers west of the highway bridge that crosses the river at Toruń.

This structure, built in 1864, served the Mennonite congregation in Deutsch Wymyśle, now Nowe Wymyśle. It was used as a house of worship until 1945. Local officials are exploring the possibilities of developing a museum in this structure.

Built in 1892, this building was used as a church and school by the congregation in Deutsch Kazuń, now Kazuń. Today it is a private residence.

# V

# AREAS INCORPORATED INTO RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

## A. Kaliningrad Region

This survey has emphasized Mennonite settlements in today's Poland. At the same time, it should be noted that political boundaries in this part of Europe have been far from static in modern times. Thus, at the end of World War II the then Soviet Union (today: Russia) annexed parts of Poland and East Prussia where Mennonites also lived.

The area now known as the Kaliningrad Region (oblast), part of the former East Prussia, also has a long history of providing a homeland for Mennonites. This region, once part of the holdings of the Knights of the Teutonic Order, changed dramatically in 1525 when its last grand master secularized it and he became Duke Albert, ruler of the territory, although under the titular sovereignty of the Polish king. Albert adopted Lutheranism, and established his duchy as the first officially Lutheran state.

At first, Albert adopted a rather tolerant religious policy, and in the 1530s some Mennonites from the Netherlands and the Vistula region followed the duke's call for more settlers. The East Prussian religious leader, Bishop Speratus, vigorously opposed allowing "heretics" to settle in the region. Nonetheless, some members of the nobility welcomed skilled farmers who could drain marshlands, and Mennonites continued to come. Soon the new immigrants established a community near Memel (now Klaipeda, in Lithuania), as well as further up the river, especially in the region near Tilsit. Their skills in the dairy industry gained them fame as experts in cheesemaking, and as settlements grew up along the Memel (now Nemunas) River, their cheese production became especially appreciated. By 1723 they were supplying the Königsberg market with some 400 tons of "Tilsit" cheese. Another group settled not far from Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), while others settled in the city. Those who settled in the city encountered opposition from the guilds, and so often developed their own trades. Some of them, such as Jo-

hann Peter Sprunk, established a thriving brandy distillery; others became noted for their production of fine lace and braid.

Despite promising developments, in 1723, when Mennonites resisted King Frederick William's demands that they serve in his army, the king issued a decree declaring that such persons were to leave his realm. Once again many Mennonites had to look for new homes, which they found chiefly in lands along the Vistula and also temporarily in the Netherlands. This expulsion created severe hardships for many, but fortunately Dutch Mennonites as well as those living along the Vistula came to the rescue. Their generous financial support in resettling those driven out is dramatically evident in the extensive records preserved in the Amsterdam archives.[50]

Most of the Mennonites in the city of Königsberg, however, were allowed to stay. They had become a significant factor in the business life of the community, and the king needed their taxes. For this concession, Mennonite business persons were required to pay higher taxes than others .[51]

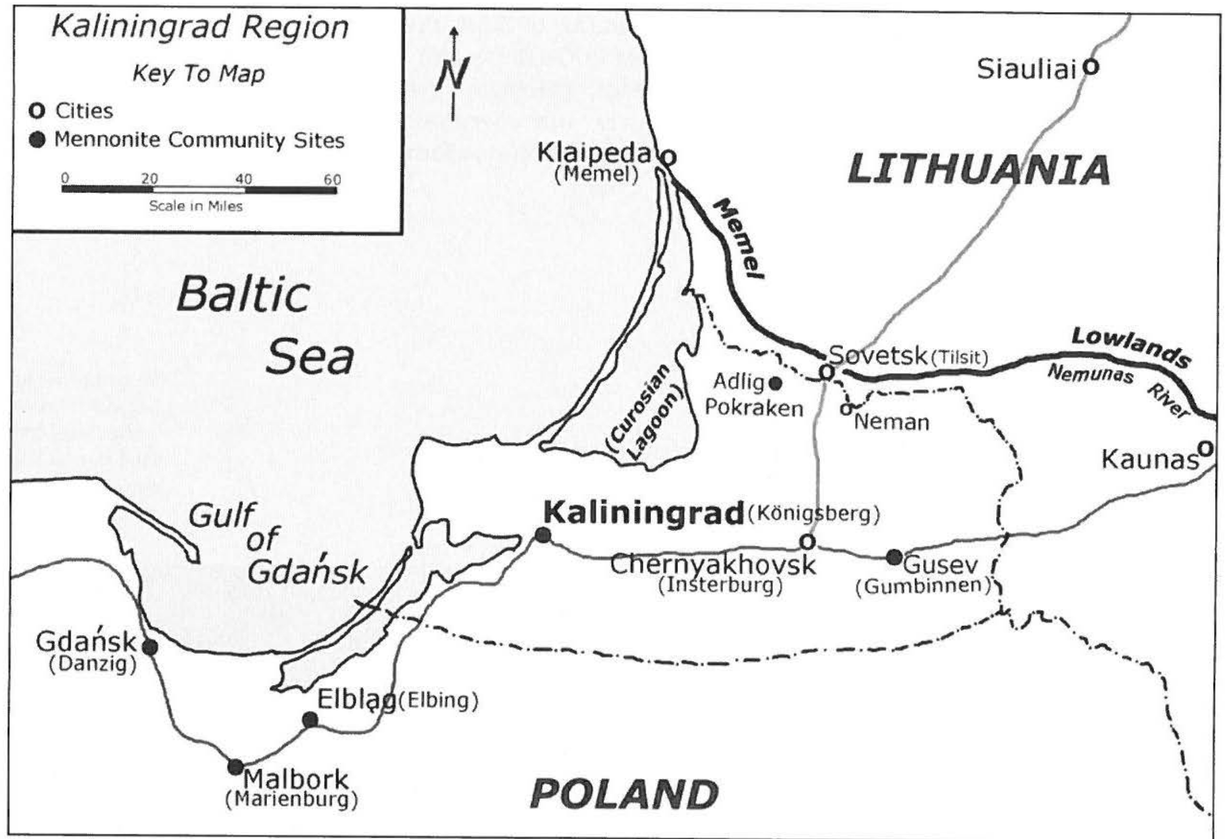
The expulsion decree was soon rescinded. In 1740, a new king, Frederick II (the Great), issued an invitation to Mennonites to return to his kingdom. Their economic contributions were too important to overlook. From then until the end of World War II, Mennonites could live freely in East Prussia, although they had to pay extra taxes because they declined to serve in the army. Mennonite communities arose both in cities and in farming regions. Settlers again came to the Memel River lowlands and established a strong community near Tilsit (now Sovetsk). For a time they were known as the Lithuanian congregation; sometimes they were also referred to as the Memel lowlands congregation. Later, Adlig Pokraken emerged in this area as a main center of Mennonite settlers, and a manor house here was rebuilt as a church. The membership reached 521 (in 1887), and in 1940 it numbered 326. Other Mennonites also came and added to the number already living in the capital, Königsberg. In this city, just a few blocks west of where the Albertina university stands today, they built a church, as well as two homes for the poor. Also, during much of the 18th century, Immanuel Kant taught at the university; some Mennonites felt that some of the philosopher's views, such as the emphasis on the inviolability of the individual's conscience were very close to Mennonite teachings, and used them to defend their position of pacifism.[52] Apparently Mennonites gained a very positive reputation, for in 1842 a government report asserted that "they have had the greatest and most salutary influence directly and by example on...the culture and civilization of their neighbors.[53]

Some Mennonites also established themselves at Gumbinnen (now Gusev), and built another community.

In 1846, Carl Harder, pastor of the Königsberg congregation, launched the *Monatsschrift für die evangelischen Mennoniten*.[54] In the first issue, Harder announced that the purpose of the periodical was to encourage the "spirit of love in the hearts" of all readers, to unite and to deepen spiritual vitality. Evidently his writing appealed to people beyond his city. In 1847 some non-Mennonite families in Elbing asked to join his church; he consented and a new Mennonite church arose in that city. Harder eventually moved there and for a time served as pastor both in Elbing and Königsberg. Harder's periodical was discontinued in 1848, but he continued writing and teaching. In 1868 Harder was called to Elbing, and he served as pastor there until his death in 1898. Throughout his life, Harder maintained close ties with churches in East Prussia. Churches in both Königsberg and Adlig Pokraken continued to be used until the end of World War II.

That war, however, brought death and destruction to more than four centuries of Mennonite life on the eastern shores of the Baltic. Flight and expulsion, often accompanied by suffering and death, ended an important chapter of the Mennonite story. Fortunately, a good number of the former inhabitants of East Prussia found new homes in Germany and North and South America. The region around Königsberg, however, now became the Kaliningrad oblast, or region, and formed part of the Soviet Union.

**Mennonites in the Tilsit area acquired this manor house in Adlig Pokraken. They remodeled it, and it served as the church for the congregation in this area.**


Kaliningrad Region
Key To Map
Cities
Mennonite Community Sites
0 20 40 60
Scale in Miles
N
Klaipeda
(Memel)
LITHUANIA
Siauliai
Memel
Baltic
Sea
Sovetsk (Tilsit)
Lowlands
Nemunas River
Adlig
Pokraken
Neman
(Curosian
Lagoon)
Kaunas
Kaliningrad (Königsberg)
Gulf
of
Gdańsk
Chernyakhovsk
(Insterburg)
Gusev
(Gumbinnen)
Gdańsk
(Danzig)
Elbląg (Elbing)
Malbork
(Marienburg)
POLAND

**B. Galicia (Ukraine)**

With the first partition of Poland in 1772, Austria, Prussia and Russia each gained substantial new territory. The region acquired by Austria was the southwestern part of Poland, Galicia, which was now incorporated into the Austrian empire. Much of this region was agrarian and sparsely settled. The new rulers invited settlers to help develop the region, and some Mennonites joined this movement. In 1784 six Mennonite families began to take advantage of this new opportunity, and in the next two years twenty-one more families joined the quest for a more promising home. Under Emperor Franz Joseph, immigration increased as the Austrian rulers tried to strengthen their control and culture. For a time, use of the German language was enforced at the university in Lemberg, as the former Lwow had been renamed. Settlers coming from various areas of Germany accepted the Austrian government's invitation to come to Galicia and make it more productive. They came mostly from the Palatinate and Rheinland, from places such as Ibersheim, Heppenheim, Harxheim, Alzey, Bad Durkeim and others.

A good number of these Mennonites had settled in these regions because of the severe persecution their ancestors had experienced in Switzerland. In that country, as in numerous German states, Anabaptists or Mennonites had been sold as galley slaves, imprisoned or banished. They were punished for practicing their faith, such as teaching that baptism should be given only to those who were believers and insisting that the state should not control doctrinal statements. In addition, they rejected violence and military service. Both Catholic and Protestant leaders had little sympathy for such radical ideas. By the mid-18th century, a larger measure of toleration made life easier for Mennonites, but other regions and countries often offered more opportunities and greater freedom. Some looked for new homes in America; others decided to take advantage of new settlement opportunities provided in lands recently acquired by Austria.

As Mennonites took advantage of the offer to settle in more promising areas, they established new homes in the vicinity of Lemberg (Polish L'wów; Ukrainian L'viv). Here, a number of new settlements arose. One of the earliest Mennonite communities in this region, the village Falkenstein, was established in 1784. Two years later more settlers established themselves in the nearby villages Einsiedel and Rosenberg. Evidently Austrian authorities were determined to encourage development in these lands recently acquired. In 1786, Emperor Franz Joseph II himself visited the new Mennonite settlements, and the grateful

newcomers greeted him warmly. One of them, Daniel Bergthold from the Rosenberg village, even composed a eulogy in his honor.[55]

The community continued to develop, and in Einsiedel a schoolhouse was built in 1816; it also served as the church. Then in 1839, when a new schoolhouse was built, the former building continued to be used as a church. Meanwhile, Mennonites expanded to new communities, such as Neuhof, Ehrenfeld, Wiszenka, Troscianec and others. Most of them were situated within a fifty-mile radius of Lemberg. In 1850, a land purchase at Horozanna Wielka provided opportunity to found another settlement, and in 1862 further expansion of landholdings became possible with the purchase of a substantial estate, Kiernica. Then, in the 1860s and 1870s, other estates, to be divided into smaller farms, were purchased in Dobrowlany (near today's Strij), Lipowce (now Lypivtsy) and Podusilna.

Wherever they settled, church life was central, and several congregations were organized. A number of noted ministers, such as Jakob Muller the Elder and Jakob Muller the Younger as well as Christian Ewy, provided pastoral leadership for many years. Later, noted minister Johannes van der Smissen came to serve as elder. Church records show that in 1860 he served congregations in Einsiedel and the nearby village of Horozanna . Other villages also brought ministers from outside, but sometimes this proved less than successful. One response was for the communities to send one of their own, Arnold Bachmann, to study theology, and then return to become a pastor.

Expansion continued in various ways. The Kiernica estate was divided into eight farms to accommodate the children and their families. By 1880 at least 142 Mennonite families lived in the various settlements.

The Galician Mennonites established ties with their fellow-believers elsewhere. Mutual visits served to preserve strong ties with their original home churches; in addition, visits and correspondence developed close relationships with older Mennonite communities in the Vistula Delta, and along the river.[56] Meanwhile a number of Mennonites in this region were intrigued by reports of wide open spaces in America, awaiting settlers. This might allow larger, unified settlements, rather than the smaller, scattered settlements in Galicia. Eventually about half of the Galician Mennonites decided to seek new opportunities in America and settled in communities in the Midwest. In the 1880s more than fifty families left Galicia and came to Kansas and Minnesota.

Families that chose to remain in Galicia continued to farm, but also expand into urban settings. A number became involved in business and various other occupations.

In 1911 members purchased a building in Lemberg, which was expanded to serve as a local Mennonite center, with a chapel, library and a dormitory for students. For a few years, the Mennonites in Galicia published the *Mennonitische Gemeindeblätter*, designed to strengthen ties among the various Mennonite communities in the region and beyond. Over the decades, several churches were built; by 1913 the church in Kiernica had 196 members.

With the reestablishment of Poland after World War I, Lemberg, again under Polish rule, was renamed L'wów. For a time Ukraine fought for control of Galicia, but finally in 1921 the Peace of Riga brought peace to this area. Mennonites could now begin a reconstruction of their communities. In the interwar years the congregation boldly faced the challenge of acculturation. When a German historian warned of "polonization," Pastor Arnold Bachmann responded, "We Mennonites think otherwise. We are a religious community that rejects hate, also in the political and national arenas." This opportunity, however, was brief. World War II brought renewed trials for the Mennonites here. With the partition of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939-1940, the latter gained control of Galicia. Mennonites and other German-speaking people in this region were transferred to parts of Poland then under German rule. With the collapse of Germany at the end of World War II, Mennonites who had scattered from Galicia once more faced the challenge of finding a new home. Eventually, after flight and uncertainty, many of them found new homes in Uruguay, Germany and North America. Today, the villages and towns where these Mennonites once lived form part of newly-independent Ukraine. Considerable visual evidence of earlier Mennonite settlements here can still be found in old homes, wells, various buildings and cemeteries in the region around the city now known as L'viv.[57] Mennonites who survived the tragedies of war, expulsion

**Former Mennonite center in Lemberg, Galicia.**

and treks, however, have found homes elsewhere, but some of them return periodically to visit the land where their ancestors settled in the 18th and 19th centuries, and to strengthen bridges of memory.

# VI

# NEW HOPES, NEW HOMES

With the flight or expulsion of Mennonites from their traditional Heimat along the Vistula and the incorporation of these lands into the state of Poland (and in some cases the Soviet Union), these "displaced persons" had to find a new homeland. Some had not been fortunate enough to escape and found themselves at the mercy of a victorious Soviet army; most, however, were permitted to settle in what would become the Federal Republic of Germany, or in North or South America.

In several instances, as at Enkenbach or Backnang in the country then called West Germany, the refugees from the east formed new Mennonite congregations. Usually, however, existing congregations welcomed the newcomers and simply absorbed them into the church community. The result was that thousands of Mennonites from former Prussian lands gave new strength and vitality to numerous congregations in West Germany.

Similarly, several thousand displaced Mennonites also found new homes in Canada, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil. Marked cultural, economic and political differences, especially in South America, later persuaded some of the new settlers to return to Germany; others stayed to confront the challenges and opportunities. Very few of these refugees were allowed entry into the United States at that time.

Whether in parts of the New World, or in older communities in Germany, despite the almost overwhelming loss of home and possessions, of family members and friends, despite the hardships of flight and relocation, the pilgrims from afar created new homes and new hope.

They and their legacy triumphed.

# VII

# RETRACING MENNONITE JOURNEYS

## Gdańsk, City of History and Culture

### Gdańsk Today

Majestic and vibrant, Gdańsk today serves as the meeting ground of Poland and the world of the Baltic. Rebuilt from the ruins of war, the present city mirrors centuries of history. Centers such as the towering Church of St. Mary and Renaissance City Hall reflect a proud, prosperous past when the city served as the most important commercial and cultural center on the Baltic. With some 460,000 inhabitants, Gdańsk is Poland's largest city on the Baltic.

### Gdańsk, City of Ships

From its earliest days, Danzig has been wed to the sea. Products, such as grain and timber, were shipped down the mighty Vistula to Danzig. Here, ships from many countries came to acquire goods needed in Western Europe. In addition, several hundred Danzig ships called on ports in other parts of Europe to deliver grain, potash, amber and other products. The "old crane" loaded its grain on to scores of ships, both domestic and foreign. Today the old crane houses a maritime museum (Muzeum Morskie). Across the Motława River, restored former storage buildings show that a great deal of grain and other products could be held here awaiting shipment.

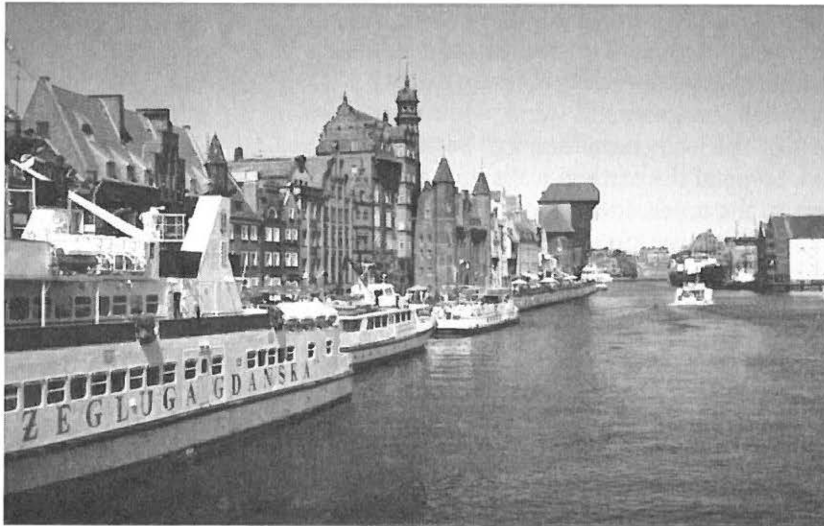
### The Old City, ideal for a walking tour

Historic Danzig, like medieval and early-modem cities in other parts of Europe, was a walled city. In part, the defensive ring was supplied by the Motława River, in part by walls that were broken only by a number of gates providing access to the city. Many of these gates still stand, while most parts of the walls have long ago been leveled. Some of the earthen walls can still be seen on the south side of the city.

Within these former walls much of the old city has been preserved. Its heart is to be found along or near the Long Market and the Long Street (Długi Targ and Długa Ulica). Stretching from the Motława to the High Gate (Brama Wyżynna), this combi-

Panorama of the city center, with the lowlands (Danzig Werder) visible In the distance. In the right foreground, the tower of St. Catherine dominates the scene, while in the center, the massive Church of St. Mary seems to dwarf the rest of the area.






The Motława waterfront reflects the importance of Danzig's sea trade. In the background, the Old Crane (Stare Żuraw), once used to load ships and hoist masts, is today a maritime museum (Centralne Muzeum Morskie).

nation of market and street was the center of earlier commercial and cultural life. When the Polish king came to visit the city, this was the royal route. Here he would reside, and here too, in the imposing gothic City Hall, the city fathers shaped the destiny of Danzig.

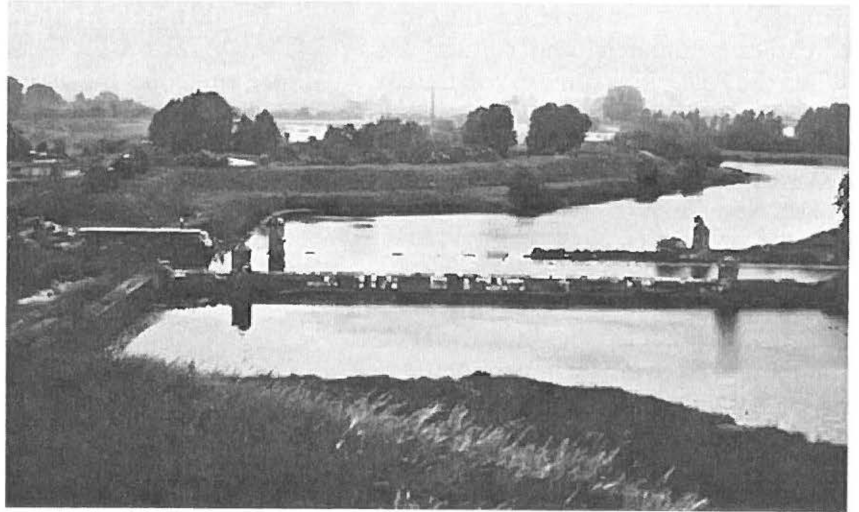
## Along the "Royal Road"

On either side of the Long Market, Danzig's patrician families built their substantial and often ornate homes. Architectural style, evident especially in the gables of the houses, indicates a strong influence from the Netherlands. Indeed, the city council in early modern times employed architects and planners from Amsterdam and other centers in the Netherlands as a prosperous Danzig became increasingly cosmopolitan.

Late in the 16th century, Johannes Kramer built the basic structure of the High Gate. Later, its artistic facade was completed by Willem van den Blocke. It bore the coats of arms of Danzig, Poland and Royal Prussia, thereby signifying its crucial role as the nexus of different traditions, cultures and political systems. Now the High Gate stands alone; originally it formed part of the fortification of the city. Its Latin inscription extols the virtues upon which the government of the city was to be built: "Justice and piety are the foundation of all rule."

Behind the High Gate, at the beginning of the Long Street, the Golden Gate (Brama Złota) embodies the architectural design and skill of another immigrant from the Netherlands, Abraham van den Blocke. Again, an inscription, this time in German and Latin, above the arch expresses the very

**For centuries the Long Market (Długi Targ) served as the administrative and commercial center of Danzig. Kings and other dignitaries proceeded along this "royal route."**



Earthen walls and moats such as these remnants that once separated Danzig from the lowlands to the east and southeast, provided an effective deterrent to the invader in much of the city's history.

The proud High Gate, emblazoned with the coats of arms of Danzig, Royal Prussia and Poland, reflects the wealth and influence of the city. It was designed as the main entrance to the city from the west and was flanked on either side by the former earthen wall.

practical aspects of Danzig's statecraft. As the visitor passes through the expansive gate, the richly variegated patrician houses along Długa Ulica become visible. The facades of the houses, often narrow but always striking and distinctive, are frequently embellished with statues, carvings, or various late-gothic traceries. The house marked number 12 here, once the home of Councilman Johann Uphagen, is one of the most ornately decorated and bears witness to the high office held by its former owner. Other houses along this street, such as number 28, which once belonged to the family Ferber, also indicate that in early modern times this street was home to the people who shaped the political and commercial life of Danzig.

### The City Hall

The towering sandstone structure, the City Hall, was begun in the 14th century, but over the centuries many changes and additions have been made. The tower itself was built between 1465 and 1492, only after Danzig had freed itself from domination by the Teutonic Order. In 1561 the figure of King Sigismund Augustus was added, as was the carillon. A year later, another craftsman added the coats of arms of Danzig, Poland and Royal Prussia to the east side of the structure. A few years later, a sundial, with its Latin inscription, "Umbra sunt dies nostri" (our days are shadows), was added. The exterior steps and the Baroque portal, with its two lions, were added just a few years before Danzig's virtually independent status fell prey to Prussian ambition.

Today this once central administrative building serves as the historical museum of

**The Long Street (Ulica Długa) formed part of the "Royal Route." In former days, wealthy citizens lived here and shaped Danzig's destiny.**

Danzig (Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Gdańska). The restored rooms again depict the renaissance and baroque splendor of Danzig's age of glory.

Inside the impressive structure one is soon reminded of the fact that this is where the great and mighty of the city once shaped the destiny of this mistress of the Baltic. The Guildhall (Sala Ławy) once served as the arena in which major issues were discussed and important decisions made. The voice of those who acted here could be overridden only by the King of Poland—and then only with difficulty.

**Top of the tower of City Hall.**

Another room in City Hall, known as the Great Council Chamber (Wielka Sala Rady) today serves as the center of the museum. Friezes adorn the wall, and a fireplace bearing the Danzig coat of arms, built by Willem van der Meer in 1593, presents further evidence of Dutch ties with Danzig. The tall, upright clock in this room was given to the city by King Leszczyński, while the inscription on the ceiling, "We are united by a heavenly bow" (Coelesti iungimur arcu), again illustrates that early modern Danzig felt herself closely tied to the Polish royal crown.

On a clear day, the visitor to Danzig is well-advised to climb the stairs leading up the tower. From the viewing platform near the top of the tower, one can see the expanse of the city and its immediate environs, from the Baltic to the surrounding hills and lowlands. The Westerplatte and the shipyards are easily visible, while much of the panorama is punctuated with the many spires of churches. The whole sweep of the

Long Street can be viewed from here, as can the massive towers of St. Mary's. On the southeastern horizon, one can see the fertile lowlands, long ago reclaimed from the flooding of the Vistula, now home to farmers with their numerous cows and lush pasture lands.

### The Long Market

Perhaps the most impressive structure on the Long Market is the Artushof, once a commercial and social center for Danzig's business and commercial interests. Its facade was created in 1617 by Abraham van den Blocke. Just in front of the Artushof, the Neptune Fountain, with the god of the sea brandishing his trident, again bears mute witness to Danzig's close ties with the sea.

Many of the residences along the market were built in Renaissance or Baroque style and frequently reflect the positions of power and wealth enjoyed by their owners. The Golden House (Złota Kamienica) once belonged to Johann Speimann, one of Danzig's more illustrious mayors. It too was built by Abraham van den Blocke, in this case assisted by another architect, Johann Voigt. Later, the prominent patrician Steffen family lived here. Many of the other facades, with their friezes and reliefs of historical and mythical figures, reflect an age of wealth and art. The restoration of these facades is eloquent testimony to Poland's ability to make this beautiful city square rise from the debris of destruction following World War II. Most of this area had been almost totally destroyed when the guns fell silent here in spring 1945.

### The Church of St. Mary

Few churches so dominate their city's skyline as does the massive Gothic structure, the Church of St. Mary. It is perhaps the largest Gothic church in Eastern Europe. For six centuries this edifice has towered over the city and has served as a symbol of the prominent role that religion has long played in the life of this community.

Today the church, for more than four hundred years a bastion of Lutheranism, is a center of the Catholic Church in Poland. Although the city became Lutheran early in the reformation, it never engaged in the iconoclasm that characterized parts of Western Europe. As a result, religious artwork in the church was preserved. The destruction during World War II, however, robbed the church of many of its artistic treasures. The work of restoration is continuing.

### Other Churches

Gdańsk is a city of historic churches. In the late Middle Ages bishops, religious orders and city officials combined their efforts

At the end of the Long Market, the Green Gate (Brama Zielona) invites the passerby to walk under its arches toward the Motława River.

Church of St. Mary and the Ulica Mariacka, the picturesque street leading to the church from the waterfront.

to give the city impressive churches. Most still stand today, although some were so badly damaged in war that they have not been restored.

Among the historic churches are two Gothic sandstone structures on the Street of St. John (Świetojańska), the Church of St. John and the Church of St. Nicholas, the latter a part of the Dominican monastery. St. Nicholas was undamaged by war and has been able to preserve its rich artistic heritage. Other nearby churches, those as St. Peter and Paul and of the Holy Trinity, add to the Gothic architectural style in the city. The Church of the Holy Trinity is part of the building complex that includes the historic Danzig Gymnasium, founded in 1550, long a center for the study of science, medicine and Protestant theology. In 1872 it was transformed into a museum. Today it houses some of Danzig's most noted paintings, sculptures, tapestries and furniture. Here also is Hans Memling's triptych, "The Last Judgment," Danzig's most prized painting.

The oldest part of Danzig (Stare Miasto) contains some of the city's oldest structures. The St. Elizabeth Church was built here six centuries ago, while nearby the house of the Pelplin abbots (Dom Opatow Pelplińskich) was built by the Cistercians. Another nearby church, that of St. Catherine, is one of the city's most pleasing Gothic structures, while the Church of St. Brigit (Kościoł Swiętej Brygidy), recently restored, has come to be closely tied to Solidarity. Its parishioners were once largely drawn from the nearby ship yards.

### A Monument to World War II

Since World War II began here, it is not

**The abbots of Pelplin were among the earliest ecclesiastical or civic authorities to invite Mennonites to settle on lands along the Vistula.**

surprising that the city has built monuments to the events that occurred in September 1939. The Westerplatte monument, adjacent to the Bay of Gdańsk, commemorates the soldiers who died after the cruiser Schleswig-Holstein began shelling the Polish fortification situated here. The battle raged for a week, although an early end had been expected. In addition, a monument at the site of the old Polish post office, together with an exhibit inside the building, depict the tragedy that took place here at the beginning of the war. By the terms of the Versailles Treaty, Poland was permitted to have postal service within the city of Danzig, itself a part of the Free City State of Danzig. On September 1, 1939, German troops attacked the post office, which in turn was defended by its Polish staff. A week later the post office was taken and the defenders shot. It was an ominous beginning to years of tragedy.

**The Westerplatte monument, built to honor the Polish soldiers who defended this fortification as World War II began. The Poles defended their position from September 1-7.**

### A Monument to Solidarity

Today Gdańsk still serves as a commercial port, although much of the activity has shifted to its neighbor, Gdynia, just to the northwest. Gdańsk has, instead, concentrated on building specialist vessels for oil rigs and yachts. Here, in docks and wharves made famous by Lech Walesa and Solidarity, thousands of workers once worked to make the ships that would be used throughout Eastern Europe and beyond.

### Walking Tour of Gdańsk

Today's visitor to Gdańsk will find that the city (see map on page 82) is readily accessible by air, sea and land travel. Visitors coming by rail can arrive at the central railroad station (3), near the center of the historic old city. This is also a good place to begin a walking tour. In addition, the station is close to hotels and shopping centers.

### Itinerary

Upon leaving the railroad station, turn right and proceed along the boulevard to the High Gate (Brama Wyżynna) (27). The

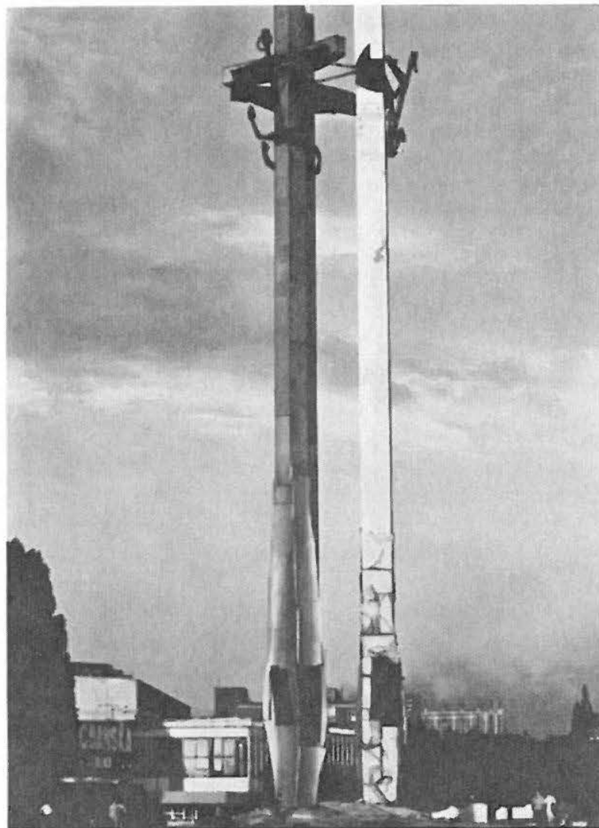
frieze above the arch displays the coats of arms of the city, Poland, and Royal Prussia, This gate served as the start of the "royal route" when Polish kings visited their port on the Baltic.

Behind the gate, the former prison (28) and the torture chamber are stark reminders of harsh judicial systems that once were a common part of the European scene. Just to the east of the prison, the Golden Gate (Złota Brarna) (29) stands at the beginning of the Long Street (Ulica Długa). Built as a triumphal arch by the Dutch architect, Abraham van den Blocke in 1614, it bears an inscription that reflects the confidence of those who once shaped the destiny of this proud city. "Es müsse wohl gehen, Denen, die Dich Lieben, es müsse Friede sein inwendig in Deinen Mauem und Glück in Deinen Palästen," from Psalm 122 (They shall prosper that love you; there shall be peace within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces). Through this arch one enters the heart of the old city, the "royal route" that stretches from the gate to the Motława River at the other end of this east-west street and market.

Before entering the Long Street, one may observe several historic landmarks. Just to the north of the Golden Gate, the late-Gothic structure known as the Hall of St. George formerly served as the guildhall of merchants. Beyond the hall, remains of the old city wall including a tower, can still be seen.

Further to the north of the Hall of St. George, the former arsenal (26), built in Renaissance style in 1605, today houses the Gdańsk Institute of Art. A little further, a monument to King John Sobieski honors one of Poland's most famous rulers. This

**Built next to the Lenin Shipyards in 1980, this monument reflects the influence of Solidarity. It was built to commemorate the workers who were killed here in 1970. The crosses tower above the surrounding area.**



monarch also firmly asserted principles of religious freedom when he insisted that dissenters would be protected by royal decree. Their rights and privileges were reaffirmed several times during his reign. This monument once stood in Lvov (Lemberg), a city lost to Poland after World War II when the boundary between Poland and the Soviet Union was moved westward.

Upon returning to the Golden Gate and passing under its impressive arch, one enters the Long Street. The bas-reliefs on house facades, the various figures on the house gables, indeed, the emphasis upon Renaissance architectural style, indicate that the rich and powerful once lived here. Several of the houses on this street, known today as the Ulica Długa, are especially striking, the Steffens House and the Uphagen House. (30) Both are named for prominent Danzig families.

Further to the east along this street, the towering City Hall (Ratusz Glówny) (32) stands at the heart of the city. It was begun as a Gothic structure in the 14th century, but in the years 1593-1611 Anthony van Obbergen rebuilt it according to Renaissance style. Its 82 meter high tower is crowned by a golden statue of King Sigismund II Augustus. The tower provides an excellent view of the city and the surrounding countryside as well as the Bay of Gdańsk.

The city hall itself serves as a museum today and contains some of Gdańsk's most treasured works of art. The Red Chamber, with its ornate ceiling, is especially colorful and impressive. Various rooms and halls also have photographic displays showing the city after the destruction in World War II. The city hall marks the place where the Long Street is broadened to become the Long Market (Długi Targ) (34). At the beginning of this expansive pedestrian mall the facade of the Court of Arthur (Dwór Artusa) (33) reflects the renaissance artistic style of its creator, Abraham van den Blocke. This building once served as the business transaction center of Danzig. Before it stands a statue of Neptune depicting the city's close ties with the sea.

**The docks of Gdańsk remind the visitor that the life of this historic city has always been tied to the sea. The Vistula provided the link with the interior of Poland, while the Baltic united this port city with centers of commerce throughout northern Europe.**

On either side of the Long Market a rich variety of architectural design makes this the most artistically satisfying part of the city. Interspersed among the decorated facades of the houses are shops, restaurants and cafes. In addition, numerous artists' stalls along the market allow the visitor to acquire various creations inspired by the multi-faceted mosaic that is Gdańsk.

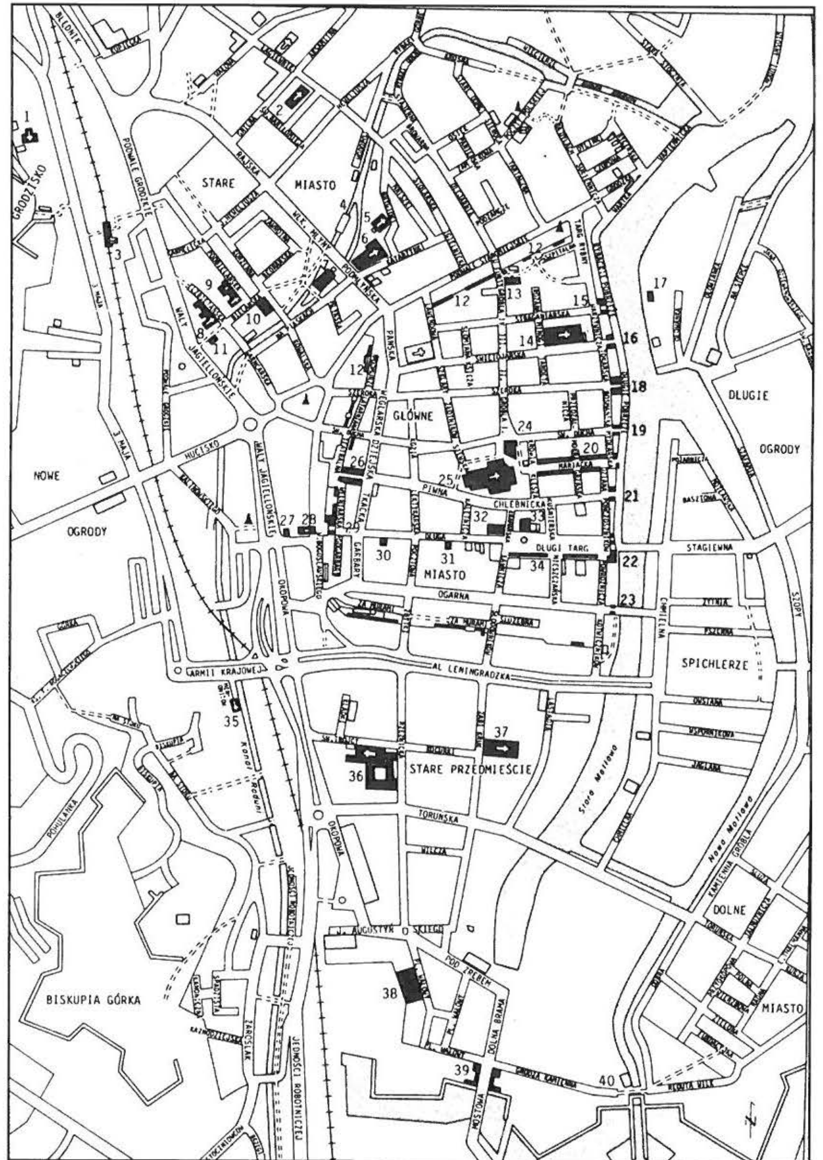
At the end of the Long Market the Green Gate (Zielona Brama) (22) opens onto the Motława River, with its Long Bridge (21) running along the west side of the river. The Green Gate, with its four archways, was built in 1568 as a residence for the king when he chose to visit Danzig.

As one walks northward along the Long Bridge, one quickly comes to St. Mary's Gate (Brama Mariacka) (20), which opens on to St. Mary's Street (Mariacka). This street leads directly to the massive Church of St. Mary (25). Built in the 14th and 15th centuries, this Gothic structure was badly damaged in World War II, but has been restored. Its tower, 78 meters high, soars above the city's skyline. St. Mary's Street is lined with large raised porches alternating with ground-level showcases or entrances leading to shops in basements. The latter when shuttered are completely obscured.

Upon returning to the Motława and proceeding further to the left (northward), one sees a well-known Gdańsk landmark, the Old Crane (Stary Żuraw) (8). Today this structure houses the city's maritime museum and has a wide variety of nautical displays. In earlier times, this crane raised ship masts and loaded the hundreds of ships that came to the port from all over Europe. Before proceeding to the Old Crane, one can turn in to the Holy Ghost Street (Św. Ducha). Here, in house number 94, the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer was born in 1788. As one continues to the Old Crane, an old tower can be seen at the north end of the long bridge. It is a remnant of a fortification wall that once protected the city.

Proceeding north along the Long Bridge, one can see the King's Warehouse (Spichrz Królewski) (17) just across the river. Parts of the storehouse have been restored and serve as a powerful reminder of the immense quantities of grain and other goods that used to be stored here for shipment throughout western Europe.

A number of churches in this vicinity are of historic and artistic interest. Just two blocks north of Św. Ducha lies the street Świetojańska with two historic churches, the Church of St. John (Kościół Św. Jana) (14) and the Church of St. Nicholas (Kościół Św. Mikolaja). St. John, a Gothic structure built in the 14th and 15th centuries, is currently being restored and now serves to




Gdańsk: The historic city center

**Guide to Places in Gdańsk**

1. Corpus Christi Church (K. Bożego Ciala)
2. St. Bartholomew's Church (K. Św. Bartłomieja)
3. Train Station
4. Raduni Canal
5. St. Brigit's Church (K. Św. Brygidy)
6. St. Katherine's Church (K. Św. Katarzyny)
7. Large Mill (Wielki Młyn)
8. St. Elizabeth's Church (K. Św. Elzbiety)
9. St. Joseph's Church (K. Św. Józefa)
10. Old City Hall (Ratusz Staromiejski)
11. Pelplin Abbot's House (Dom Opatów Pelplińskich)
12. Remains of City Wall
13. Church and Hospital of the Holy Ghost (K. Św. Duchai Szpital)
14. St. John's Church (K. Św. Jana)
15. Crocheter's Gate (Brama Straganiarska)
16. St. John's Gate (Ruina Bramy Świętojańskiej)
17. Royal Warehouse (Spichrz Królewski)
18. Crane (Żuraw)
19. Gate of the Holy Ghost (Ruina Bramy Św. Ducha)
20. St. Mary's Gate (Brama Mariacka)
21. Long Bridge (Długie Pobrzeźe)
22. Green Gate (Brama Zielona )
23. Cow Gate (Brama Krowia)
24. Royal Chapel (Kaplica Królewska)
25. St. Mary's Church (K. N. P. Marii)
26. Arsenal (Wielka Zbrojownia).
27. High Gate (Brama Wyźynna)
28. Prison Tower
29. Golden Gate (Brama Złota)
30. Uphagen House (Dom Uphagena)
31. Ferber House (Kamienica Ferberów)
32. City Hall (Ratusz Głównego Miasta)
33. Arthur's Court (Dwór Artusa)
34. Long Market (Długi Targ)
35. Mennonite Church (former) (K. pomenonicki)
36. Holy Trinity Church (K. Św. Trójcy)
37. Church of Sts. Peter and Paul (K. Św. Piotra i Pawła)
38. Small Arsenal (Mała Zbrojownia)

house a number of sculptures preserved from the ravages of war. A few blocks to the west of St. John's, the historic Church of St. Nicholas is evidence of Danzig's long religious history. The present building stands on the remains of Romanesque foundations dating back to the 12th century, when it was founded by Dominican friars. This structure, with its richly ornamented Gothic, Baroque and Rococo interior, served as a Catholic parish church during Danzig's Protestant centuries. St. Nicholas was the only large church in Danzig not substantially damaged or destroyed in World War II. It is easily the most ornate church in Gdańsk.

**The "Golden Gate" of Gdańsk, the beginning of the "Royal Route."**

To the northwest of St. Nicholas, the Ulica Pańska leads directly to one of Danzig's oldest churches, St. Catherine's Church ( Kosciol Św. Katarzyny) (6), with its unusual onion domes. In 1525, it became the first Danzig church to become Lutheran. Just behind this church, the recently restored Church of St. Brigit (Kosciol Św. Brygldy) (5) has become known for its close ties to Solidarity. The movement sometimes held special rallies within the church.

Directly across the street from St. Catherine's on the Ulica Pańska, the Large Mill (Wielki Młyn) (7) now serves as an exhibition hall. From the 14th century until 1945, it continued to function. Using the water power of the adjacent stream, the Radunia, its 18 waterwheels could grind more than 200 tons of grain per day. Southwest from here the former city hall of the old city (Ratusz Staromiejski) (10), built by Anthony van Obbergen in Renaissance style (545), is used as a museum today. In front

of the structure a monument pays tribute to the astronomer Johannes Hevelius, who lived in Gdańsk.

Born in 1611, Johannes Hevelius studied at the Gymnasium in Danzig, then attended a number of universities in western Europe. He returned to Danzig, became a successful businessman and eventually was elected to the city council. His major interest, however, was astronomy, and on the roofs of his three houses on the Pfefferstadt Street, he built an observatory. Scholars and kings came to Danzig to visit the astronomer. Publications, scientific discoveries and inventions brought Hevelius to the attention of the scholarly world, so that he was unanimously elected to the Royal Society. When he died in 1687, he had trained and influenced a number of young astronomers who could now expand and build on the work of their mentor. Hevelius was buried in St. Catherine's Church. A plaque there honors one of Danzig's most famous citizens.

### A Visit to the (former) Mennonite Church in Gdańsk

Just west of the Raduni Canal, at the foot of Bishop's Mountain (Biskupia Górka), lies the former Mennonite church. Situated on Mennonite Street (Ulica Mennonitów)(see map, p. 82, #35), it is today a Pentecostal church. Directly behind the building, the parsonage still serves its original purpose. Similarly, the adjacent hospice still stands, a reminder of the traditional Mennonite practice of providing for the homeless and the unfortunate. After the war it became a state-owned apartment building, but recently ownership was returned to the church.

**Statue of Neptune. Neptune symbolizes the city's close ties to the sea, and here guards the city's business center, the Artushof.**

Inside the church building, Polish inscriptions on the walls remind the visitor that, as Dutch once gave way to German, so the latter has now been superseded by Polish. The visitor will discover, however, that the warmth and friendliness of the local congregation soon overcome the barriers of language differences. At the same time, the large number of young people in the congregation suggest that the future is assured.

**Other Points of Interest**

**Museums**

The National Museum, at Ul. Toruńska, houses Hans Memling's "Last Judgment," as well as other noted works of art. The Historical Museum, situated in the city hall on Długi Targ, is devoted to the history of Gdańsk. The Archeological Museum at Ul. Mariacka 25/26 and the Maritime Museum at Ul. Szeroka 67/68 are also worth seeing.

**Westerplatte**

The first shots of World War II were fired here on September 1, 1939, when the German warship Schleswig Holstein began shelling Polish fortifications. The monument pays homage to the Poles who died here.

**Gdańsk Shipyard**

Begun in 1848, this shipyard, renamed after World War II, became the largest shipbuilding center in the East Bloc countries. Just in front of the main entrance to the shipyard, three crosses—180 feet high—form a memorial to the Poles who died here when workers demonstrated for greater rights in 1970. The crosses were erected in 1980 when Solidarity gained influence.

**Oliwa**

Built over a period of several centuries, the Romanesque-Gothic church is famous for its Rococo organ. Concerts are performed regularly. Since 1926 the church has served as the cathedral for the Bishop of Gdańsk and Chełmno. The adjacent Cistercian monastery includes the Hall of Peace where the Peace of Ollwa was signed in 1660 (between Sweden and Poland). The Adam Mickiewicz Park, formerly owned by the monastery, is now a noted botanical garden.

**Sopot and Gdynia**

The neighboring cities of Sopot and Gdynia also are attractive and historic centers. In Sopot, the Grand Hotel is adjacent to a "promenade pier" that extends 516 meters into the sea. Called the "Malo," this pier provides a marvelous view of the coastline. Nine kilometers north of Sopot, the city of Gdynia offers the visitor a number of maritime sights: an oceanographic museum; a

ship converted into a museum; and an ocean aquarium. The city was built as a port by Poland from 1924-1939 and was intended to counter Poland's loss of Gdańsk by the Treaty of Versailles following World War I.

**Elbląg Today**

The city of Elbląg, with a population in excess of 127,000, is readily accessible by excellent highways, such as E81 (from Gdańsk) and T83 (from Malbork). In addition, passenger boats from north and south pass through the city regularly.[58]

Elbląg serves as the capital of the voivodship in which it is situated. Most of its buildings were destroyed in World War II; only some have been rebuilt in their original historical design. Most of the city is thus of recent construction and style.

Among the historical landmarks several are worth noting. The Market Gate, built in the 14th and 15th centuries to guard the northern approaches to the city, still stands. Only two short blocks from the Elbląg River, the 13th-century Church of St. Nicholas, with its 95-meter tower, dominates the city sky line. Nearby are a number of houses rebuilt in their original Renaissance style.

Several former churches now serve as important cultural centers. What was once the Dominican Church of St. Mary, badly damaged in World War II, has been partially restored and now houses the "Galeria El," Elbląg's major center for the exhibition of contemporary art. Similarly, the former Church and Hospital of the Holy Spirit, built in the 13th century, also rebuilt, now serves as a library for the Elbląg Voivodship. Just two blocks south of St. Nicholas, the former city Gymnasium (University preparatory school) houses exhibits of local history. Numerous items on display, such as archaeological artifacts, household furnishings, paintings and sketches present an informative introduction to the cultural history of the area.

Visitors will find a number of pleasant

**A landmark in historic Gdańsk, the sign of the salmon still invites the passerby to come and dine. "Zum Lachs" has become "Pod Łososiem."**

**Former Mennonite church in Elbing, located at 12 Garbary Street. This church, built in 1590, was the first Mennonite church built in an urban setting in Poland. The city was remarkably tolerant, and allowed some Mennonites to become citizens (Bürger).**

parks, as well as a number of restaurants and cafes.

Elbląg also marks the beginning of the Elbląski Overland Canal. Some 144 kilometers in length, this canal combines lake, river and overland travel to allow the visitor to make an excursion into the Masurian Lakes region.

## Cemeteries in the Vistula Delta

For decades since 1945 the various Mennonite cemeteries in the Vistula lowland, including the delta, were largely neglected. In many instances gravestones have been removed or broken. Many of the cemeteries were overgrown with trees, bushes and weeds.

In recent years, however, the Office of Historical and Cultural Preservation in the Voivodship of Elbląg has taken the lead in preserving some of the cemeteries as monuments to the significant economic and cultural contributions made by Mennonites in this area during the four centuries when they helped to develop the lowlands into highly productive land. Also, since 1988 the Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association, together with similar organizations in Germany and the Netherlands, has raised funds and provided help in clearing cemeteries of overgrown bushes and weeds, and repairing markers.

The preservation efforts, together with cooperative school projects, conferences, exhibitions and student exchanges, have been important factors in increasing public awareness of the Mennonite contribution to the development of this region. In addition, the inscriptions on the stones as well as the artistic preferences reflected there provide insights into contemporary practices. Some of the earliest stones, for exam-

ple, do not have names, but rather the current farm markings ("Hofmarken") chiseled into them.

### A Visit to a Mennonite Cemetery

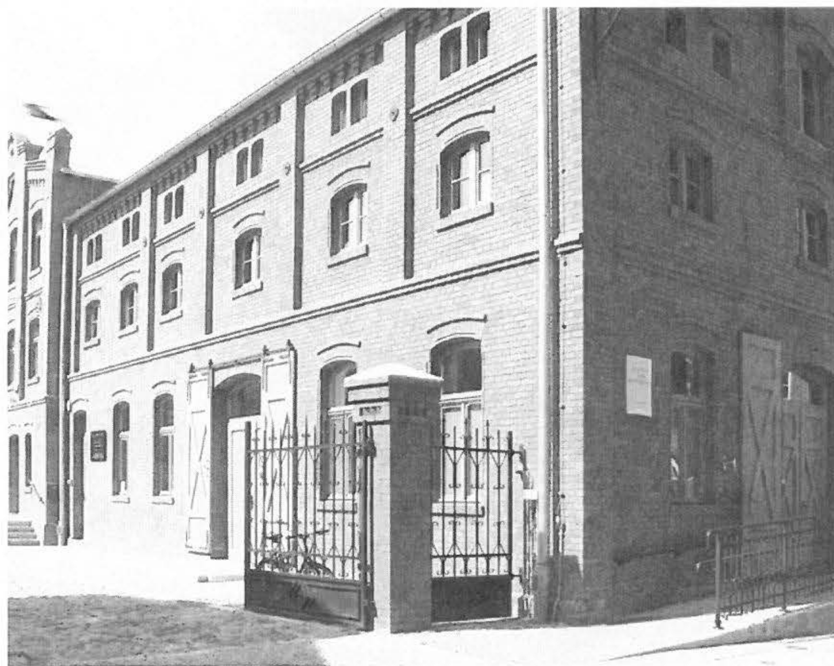
Near Stogi (formerly Heubuden), just a few kilometers across the river west of Malbork, the best preserved Mennonite cemetery in the Vistula Delta may be found. For several decades after the war it served as a cow pasture, but has recently been restored to its original function. It comprises several acres and has many beautiful trees. Many gravestones have legible inscriptions. Local authorities have invited Mennonites to create a museum in the former village school.

### Chełmno Today

This city, founded by the Teutonic Knights in 1233 and known as Kulm, served as the springboard for the conquest of the territory brought under the rule of the Knights. Kulm was granted a code of laws based upon the Law of Magdeburg; this code became the basic law of Prussian lands.

Kulm was founded on a high ridge overlooking the Vistula. Just to the north of the city lies the river valley where a number of Mennonites settled and founded numerous villages, such as Dorposch, Gogolin, Horst, Jamerau, Gross Lunau, Klein Lunau, Niederausmaass, Rossgarten, Schöneich, Schönsee, Steinwege, Venediz. The Mennonite church at Schönsee (Sosnówka) is gone, but remnants of the cemetery can still be seen.

The heart of Chełmno is the Town Hall, situated on the Rynek, or Market Square. Built in the Gothic style, it was later given Renaissance features. The old city is still surrounded by a virtually intact medieval wall; indeed, numerous important medieval structures are well-preserved, espe-



**Newly-renovated museum in Nowy Dwór, with numerous exhibits reflecting the Mennonite story in this region. (Courtesy Bolek Klein)**

**One of a number of tombstones in the Mennonite cemetery of Orlofferfelde, today Orłowski Pole. Both the name and the "Hof" or farm marking are given (courtesy of the Conservator of Monuments, Elbląg).**

cially a good number of churches. The parish church, St. Mary's, and the Church of the Benedictine Nuns, as well as the Church of the Holy Ghost, all built in the 13th and 14th centuries, reflect the high level of architecture and sculpture that characterized this civilization along the Vistula. It should be noted, however, that despite Chełmno's prominence as a Hansa, juridical and administrative center, the local bishop had his seat in nearby Chełmźa (Kulmsee) until 1824.

The bridge over the Vistula allows the visitor to view the beautiful panorama of the city, and also to see the lowlands to the north. Numerous villages developed by immigrants from the Netherlands several centuries ago are clearly visible.

### Toruń Today

Few cities have preserved their medieval outlines so completely as has Toruń. Founded in 1233, the city was originally designed to be the springboard from which the Teutonic Knights would conquer and Christianize this area. Numerous historic buildings are to be found in the Old City. The town hall on Market Square (Rynek) dates from the 14th century, but was rebuilt by the architect Anthony van Obbergen in the early 17th century. Today it houses a regional museum. Just in front of it stands a Copernicus monument; the great astronomer was born here in 1473 in the building at Ul. Kopernika 17. The Ethnographical Museum is another center worth visiting. It is situated on the Wały Gen. Sikorskiego and houses a collection of folk art, crafts and artifacts illustrative of various local occupations.

A number of impressive churches establish the character of the architecture of

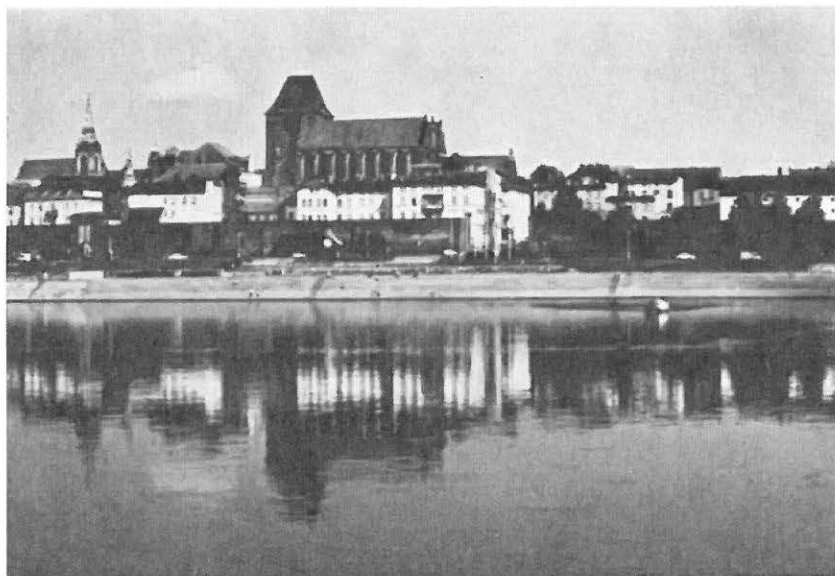
the city. On the west side of Market Square, the Holy Ghost Church, with its 64 meter-high tower, often figures prominently in public religious events. Directly east of the Copernicus Museum and House, the Church of St. John presents one of the most impressive demonstrations of Gothic architecture in this area. Its massive clock tower, numerous beautiful chapels and frescoes reflect the glory of an earlier age. Another example of Gothic architecture can be seen in the Church of St. Mary, approximately 100 meters northwest of Market Square.

### Other Sights

Visitors should be sure to take a stroll along the river front. Beautiful flower gardens and well-preserved sections of the old city wall, together with several historic gates, are the setting for one of Toruń's favorite promenades. The south side of the river provides an especially picturesque view of the city's skyline.

The two campuses of Copernicus University are also worth visiting. One is in the old town; the other in the new suburb of Bielany. At Piwnice, 15 kilometers from Toruń, the observatory serves as the center for the study of astronomy in Poland.

**Toruń as seen from across the Vistula River, with St. John's Church dominating the skyline.**



# VIII

# APPENDIX

**Villages and Towns In the Vistula Delta and Lowlands (German-Polish)**

Village coordinates are available on the web at www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/
See Glenn H. Penner, "West Prussian Mennonite Villages"

1. Altebabke / Babki
2. Altenau / Starynia
3. Altfelde / Stare Pole
4. Altrosengart / Różany
5. Altweichsel / Stara Wisła
6. Augustwalde / Wisniewo
7. Bärwalde / Niedźwiedzica
8. Beiershorst / Wybicko
9. Bischofsberg / Biskupia Górka
10. Braunsberg / Braniewo
11. Brodsack / Chlebówka
12. Christburg / Dzierzgoń
13. Christfelde / Chrystkowo
14. Damerau / Dąbrowa
15. Danzig / Gdańsk
16. Deutsch Westfalen / Małe Stwolno
17. Dorposch / Nowe Wymyśle
18. Dragass / Dragacz
19. Einlage / Przegalina
20. Elbing / Elbląg
21. Ellerwald
    1. Trift / Władysławowo
    2. Trift / Adamowo
    3. Trift / Kazimierzewo
    4. Trift / Janowo
    5. Trift / Jósefowo
22. Ellerwalde / Olszanica
23. Falkenau / Walichnowy
24. Fischau / Fiszewo
25. Fischerbabke / Rybina
26. Fürstenwerder / Żuławki
27. Gischkau / Juszkowo
28. Glettkau / Jelitkowo
29. Glabitsch / Głobica
30. Graudenz / Grudziądz
31. Grenz / Granica
32. Gross Lubin / Wielki Lubień
33. Gross Mausdorf / Myszewko
34. Gross Walddorf / Wielki Waldorf
35. Grunau / Gronowo

36. Gruppe / Grupa
37. Guteherberge / Lipicz
38. Heubude / Stogi
39. Heubuden / Stogi
40. Irrgang / Martąg
41. Jankendorf / Jankówo
42. Kalthof / Kałdowo
43. Kalteherberge / Świerzruca
44. Kamerau / Kamirowo
45. Karwenbruch / Karwińskie Bloto
46. Katznase / Kaczy Nos
47. Kalkendorf / Kławki
48. Kleinfelde / Małe Pole
49. Klein Grabau / Grabówko
50. Klein Lichtenau / Lichnówka
51. Klein Lubin / Mały Lubień
52. Klein Mausdorf / Myszewo
53. Kleinsee / Jeziorka
54. Königsdorf / Królewo
55. Kuckuk / Kukułka
56. Kulm / Chełmno
57. Ladekopp / Lubieszewo
58. Landau / Lędowo
59. Langenau / Legowy
60. Letzkau / Leszkowy
61. Lichtenau / Lichnowy
62. Lindenau / Lipinka
63. Lindenwald / Lipki
64. Liessau / Lisewo
65. Löblau / Lublewo
66. Lunau / Lunawy
67. Markushof / Markusy
68. Marienau / Marynowy
69. Mierau / Mirowo
70. Montau / Mątawy
71. Nassenhuben / Mokry Dwór
72. Neudorf / Nowa Wieś
73. Neuendorf / Nowa Wieś
74. Neumünsterberg / Nowa Kóscielnica
75. Neunhuben / Dziewięc Włók
76. Neuteich / Nowy Staw
77. Neuteichsdorf / Stawiec
78. Neuteicherwalde / Stawidła
79. Niederausmass / Górne Wymiary
80. Nickelswalde / Mikoszewo
81. Oberausmaas / Dolne Wymiary
82. Obernessau / Wielka Nieszawka
83. Ohra / Orunia
84. Oliwa / Oliwa
85. Orloff / Orłowo
86. Orlofferfelde / Orłowskie Pole
87. Osterwick / Ostrowite

88. Parsken / Parsk
89. Pasewark / Jantar
90. Petershagen / Żelichowo
91. Pillau / Piława
92. Prangenau / Pręgowo
93. Preussisch Eylau / Iława
94. Preussisch Rosengart / Rozgart
95. Quadendorf / Przejazdowo
96. Reimerswalde / Leśnowo
97. Rosenort / Rósewo (near Nowy Dwór) / Jurandowo (near Ebląg)
98. Rossgarten / Rozgarty
99. Rothebude / Stróża
100. Scharfenberg / Bystra
101. Schidlitz / Siedlce
102. Schmerblock / Błotnik
103. Schönsee / Jeziernik (near Nowy Dwór) / Sosnówka (near Chełmno)
104. Schönbaum / Drewnica
105. Schottland / Szkoty
106. Steegen / Stegna
107. Steegnerwerder / Stegienka
108. Stobbendorf / Stobiec
109. Strasburg / Brodnica
110. Stuhm / Sztum
111. Thiensdorf / Jezioro
112. Thiergart / Zwierzno
113. Thörichthof / Szaleniec
114. Tiege / Tuja
115. Tiegenort / Tujsk
116. Tiegenhagen / Cyganek
117. Tiegenhof / Nowy Dwór
118. Tilsit / Tylza
119. Warnau / Kościeleczki
120. Weichselmünde / Wisłoujście
121. Wengeln / Węgle
122. Wernersdorf / Pogorzała
123. Wintersdorf / Przechówka
124. Wolz / Welcz
125. Wotzlaff / Wocławy

# IX

## PERTINENT DATES

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| 997 | First historical reference to Danzig (Gdańsk) as "Gyddanyzc" in the writings of Bishop Adalbert (Wojciech). He was murdered by the (old) Prussians. |
| ca. 1000 | The term "Polonia" began to appear in documents. Disputes between Holy Roman Emperor and King of Poland lead to intermittent conflict and armed hostilities. |
| 1225 | Duke Conrad of Masovia invited the Teutonic Knights to help him against the (old) Prussians and promised them land along the lower Vistula River. |
| 1226 | Emperor Frederick II issued the Golden Bull of Rimini, granting to the Teutonic Knights lands near Kulm, conditional upon driving out the Prussians. |
| 1231 | The Teutonic Knights began to build fortifications at Kulm and Thorn. |
| 1233 | Kulm and Thorn were granted charters based on the Law of Magdeburg. This basic law became known as the Law of Kulm and served as the juridical foundation for most towns established along the Vistula. |
| 1234 | The pope declared lands conquered by the Knights to be church lands, under the administration of the Knights. |
| 1308 | The Teutonic Knights conquered Danzig. |
| 1361 | Danzig joined the Hansa. |
| 1386 | Poland and Lithuania were united through the marriage of Jadwiga, Queen of Poland, and Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania. |
| 1410 | At the Battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg) the forces of Poland-Lithuania defeated the Teutonic Knights. |

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| 1411 | The First Peace of Thorn ended the war between the Knights and Poland-Lithuania. |
| 1454-1466 | In the Thirteen Years' War, the Teutonic Knights were defeated by Poland and the Prussian Union. The Knights were forced to restrict themselves to what would become East Prussia. The Grand Master became a vassal of the king of Poland. The Second Peace of Thom was signed on October 19, 1466. |
| 1520-1521 | The Teutonic Knights tried to recapture some lost lands, but were unsuccessful. |
| 1525 | The reformation gained strong support in various Polish and Prussian centers. Albert, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, adopted Lutheranism and secularized the Order's lands. As Duke Albert, he swore fealty to the king of Poland. Danzig became increasingly Lutheran. |
| 1530s | Anabaptists began to settle along the Vistula. |
| 1535 | The Hansa forbade its members to transport any Anabaptists. |
| 1535 | Some Anabaptists from Moravia settled near Thorn, Kulm and Graudenz. Duke Albert ordered Anabaptists expelled from his lands; many settled in the Vistula lowlands. |
| 1543 | Publication of *Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* by Copernicus. |
| 1548 | Sigismund II Augustus became king of Poland and adopted a tolerant attitude toward the Reformation. |
| 1549 | Menno Simons wrote his letter to the "Church in Prussia." |
| 1569 | By royal decree, Royal Prussia, with its own Landtag, was incorporated into the kingdom of Poland. |
| 1573 | The Sejm, in the Confederation of Warsaw, established religious toleration. |
| 1576-1577 | War between Danzig and the king of Poland. By the peace terms Danzig agreed to pay an indemnity but retained its privileges. |
| 1598 | Quiryn van der Meulen, one-time elder of the Danzig Mennonite Church (Frisian), had the Schottland, or "Mennisten" Bible printed (Dutch). |

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| 1613 | Mennonites in the Danzig lowlands were granted exemption from military service in return for money payments. |
| 1618-1648 | The Thirty Years War spread devastation throughout much of Germany. Many parts of Poland were also affected. |
| 1621 | Brandenburg gained control over Ducal Prussia, which hereafter was governed from Berlin. |
| 1622 | Mennonites in the delta formed a fire insurance association—a model for the area. |
| 1628 | King Gustavus Adolphus landed in Pillau, conquered most of the coastline of Ducal and Royal Prussia, but did not conquer Danzig. |
| 1642 | Władysław IV issued charter affirming broad privileges for Mennonite settlers in Polish lands, and asserted that his grandfather invited them from the Netherlands. |
| 1655 | First Northern War began. Swedish army devastated much of the Vistula Delta. |
| 1660 | Peace of Oliwa ended war between Poland and Sweden. |
| 1716 | Peter the Great intervened in Polish internal strife and established temporary headquarters in Danzig. |
| 1724 | The Prussian king, Frederick William I, expelled Mennonites from his lands because of their rejection of military service. Fifteen years earlier he had allowed them to settle on depopulated areas. |
| 1728 | First Mennonite church in the Little Werder built at Thiensdorf. |
| 1730 | Russia and Prussia issued joint statement declaring intention of protecting "Protestant and Orthodox" dissidents in Poland and Lithuania. |
| 1734 | During the War of the Polish Succession, Russian and Saxon troops besieged Danzig and ravaged the delta. |
| 1754 | Mennonite church in the Large Werder built at Rosenort. |

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| 1772 | First partition of Poland. Royal Prussia, without Danzig, Graudenz and Thorn, fell under Prussian rule. Thus, the vast majority of Mennonites in Polish lands were brought under the Prussian crown. |
| 1774 | Mennonites in the lands annexed to Prussia were informed that in lieu of military service they would have to pay 5000 Taler annually to support the military academy in Kulm. |
| 1763, 1785 | Catherine the Great, tsarina of Russia, issued invitations to people in the various countries to come to settle in newly-conquered lands in south Russia. Mennonites in Prussia also learned of this opportunity, and began to consider emigration. |
| 1786 | Georg von Trappe, in the employ of Potemkin, vice regent of New Russia, urged Mennonites to move to the new lands. Officials in Danzig expressed their displeasure at the prospect of Mennonite emigration, but two emissaries, Jakob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch, went to survey the opportunities in lands offered by Trappe. |
| 1787 | Some Mennonite families from West Prussia began moving to New Russia. |
| 1788 | Several hundred people met at the Rosenort Church to participate in a farewell service for 152 families moving to New Russia. |
| 1789 | The Mennonite families reached Khortitsa on the Dnieper River and established a colony. |
| 1789 | Frederick William II issued a decree restricting further Mennonite acquisition of land (because military obligations were bound to land). |
| 1793 | Second partition of Poland. Danzig, Graudenz and Thorn (as well as other areas) were taken by Prussia. |
| 1795 | Rest of Poland divided among Austria, Prussia and Russia. |
| 1807 | Napoleonic Wars came to the Vistula Delta. Danzig was besieged and occupied by Napoleon. The lowlands were hardpressed. Danzig was estab lished as a "Free State" by Napoleon. |
| 1813 | Prussian and Russian troops reconquered Danzig. |

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| 1815 | The Congress of Vienna left Poland divided. The delta remained under Prussian rule, while a "Kingdom of Poland" was created with the Russian tsar as king. |
| 1830, 1831 | Poles revolted against Russian rule, but the uprising was crushed. |
| 1848 | Otto von Bismarck asserted that if Polish nationalists were allowed to re-establish their homeland, German territories in the east, including East Prussia and Silesia, would eventually be taken by that state—a remarkably accurate foreshadowing of events a century later. |
| 1854 | Jakob Mannhardt, pastor of the Danzig Mennonite church, founded the *Mennonitische Blätter*. The periodical continued to appear until 1941, when the German government ordered the publication stopped. |
| 1867 | The German government issued a law terminating Mennonite exemption from military service; an Order-in-Council in 1868 modified this to permit noncombatant military service. |
| 1870 | The Danzig Mennonite Church unanimously adopted a resolution permitting members to serve in the military, although noncombatant activities were recommended. |
| 1870s | Mennonite churches in Prussia struggled with responses to the military policy of the government. In some churches, as at Heubuden, sharp differences developed. Eventually, the elder, ministers and some members decided to emigrate rather than accept military service. Gradually, however, the various churches decided to accept the new government demands. |
| 1919 | The Versailles Settlement created the Danzig Free State in the Vistula-Nogat Delta. Mennonites along the Vistula now found themselves under divided political jurisdictions—that of Poland, Germany or the Free State. |
| Sept. 1, 1939 | World War II began as the German ship, Schleswig Holstein, shelled the Polish fortification, Westerplatte, at Danzig. |
| 1939-1945 | During the war, Mennonite churches sustained heavy losses in battle. |
| Mar. 30, 1945 | Last German troops in Danzig surrendered to Red Army. In weeks prior, |

thousands of Mennonites from the lands along the Vistula had fled to the west. Others were expelled later. They left a region that had been their homeland for 400 years. Most of these displaced persons found new homes in West Germany, Canada and South America.

1947 Cornelius Dirksen, elder of the Thiensdorf congregation, who had declined to flee to the west, was expelled from the new Poland.

1947 Under North American Mennonite auspices, the Mennonite Central Committee sent economic aid to Poland to help the nation rebuild. Tractors and plows, together with young men to operate the equipment, arrived in Poland during the spring.

# X

# NOTES

1. Gdańsk State Archives, 358/132 (translated by the author).

2. Gdańsk, Library, Polish Academy of Sciences, MS 494, Bl. 374ff. The Danzig Senate stipulated that offenders should be subjected to "a fine of 100 ducats."

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., MS 495.

5. Gdańsk State Archives, 7/131, pp. 33, 34.

6. Ibid., 358/132.

7. Both names live on in contemporary Gdańsk as Szkoty and Siedlce.

8. Gdańsk State Archives, 300R/Vv29, 178.

9. Ibid., 358/132.

10. This "Schottland Bible," as it came to be known, bore an inscription stating that it could be purchased in "Schotlandt by Danswijck."

11. It was issued under the title, *"Confession oder kurtzer und einfältiger Glaubensbericht der Alten Flämischen Tauff-Gesinnten Gemeinden in Preussen"* (1768).

12. Gdańsk State Archives, 368, III, 105.

13. The names of the new settlers are recorded in a document dating from 1565 (Gdańsk State Archives, 369, 1/3798).

14. E.G. Kerstan, *Die Geschichte des Landkreises Elbing* (Elbing, 1925), p. 201. The regulations were written in German, since this was the language used in the city.

15. Gottfried Lengnich, *Geschichte der Preussischen Lande Koniglich-Polnischen Antheils unter der Regierung des Konigs Michaels und Johann des dritten* (Danzig, 1748), pp. 126, 127.

16. Gdańsk State Archives, 358/132. See also Siegfried Rosenberg, ed., *Geschichte des Kreises Grosses Werder* (Klausdorf, n.d.), pp. 73-75.

17. M. Kromer, *Polska* (Wilno, 1853) quoted in Oskar Kossman, *Die Deutschen in Polen* (Marburg. Herder Institut, 1978), p. 84.

18. Herman Nottarp, *Die Mennoniten in dem Marienburger Werder. Eine kirchliche Untersuchung* (Halle, 1929), p. 2.

19. Quoted in Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Die Wehrfreiheit der altpreussischen Mennoniten* (Marienburg, 1863), pp. 73, 74.

20. Horst Penner, *Die ost-und westpreussischen Mennoniten in ihrem religiösen und sozialen Leben in ihren kulturellen wirtschaftlichen Leistungen, I* (Weierhof, 1978), p. 132.

21. H. Wiebe, *Das Siedlungswerk niederländischer Mennoniten im Weichseltal* (Marburg, 1952), p. 41.

22. Gdańsk State Archives, 358/132, 2.

23. A contemporary report noted that in earlier times "das landt und dorff Montau, welches hiebevor gahr wüste gelegen und dem ampte Roggenhausen zu gringes oder gar keinem profytt und frommen gewesen, durch ihren fleiss, mühe und gross arbeyt zu der urbarkeit gebracht" (Gdańsk State Archives, 358/124).

24. Gdańsk, Library, Polish Academy of Sciences, MS 1251, "Urkunden und Notizen zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in Westpreussen," fol. 7.

25. Gdańsk State Archives, 358/d. 87 (December 3, 1636).

26. Ibid., 358/827.

27. Ibid., 358/742. See also H. Wiebe, *Siedlungswerk*, p. 20.

28. Gdańsk State Archives, 358/153, p. 22.

29. H. Wiebe, *Siedlungswerk*, p. 22.

30. Ibid., p. 23.

31. Gdańsk, Library, Polish Academy of Sciences, MS 1251, fol. 12.

32. H. Wiebe, *Siedlungswerk*, p. 25.

33. Ibid., p. 26.

34. Ibid., p. 27.

35. Ibid., p. 28.

36. "Haeretici, vulgo Hollandi dicti," ibid., p. 28.

37. H. Wiebe, *Siedlungswerk,* p. 30.

38. Elly Nadolny, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte des Kreises Kulm* (n.p., n.d .).

39. The text of the lease is printed in H. Wiebe, *Siedlungswerk*, pp. 87 -91.

40. The text of the lease granted by the city of Kulm to Mennonites in 1604 is recorded in H. Wiebe, *Siedlungswerk,* pp. 92 -94.

41. H. Wiebe, *Siedlungswerk,* p. 36.

42. X. Froelich, *Geschichte des Graudenzer Kreises,* I (n.p., 1868), p. 349.

43. Ibid.

44. Adalbert Goertz, "Mennoniten in den Thorner Niederungen," *Westpreussen Jahrbuch* (1963), p. 123.

45. The "Wilkür und Ordnung der Dorfschafften der Thornischen Weissel Niederung, von einem Erb. Rath Königl. Stadt Thornn bestetigt und beivilligt, 1605" declared that "no sectarian or perverter of religion such as an Arian or Anabaptist, shall be tolerated in these regions" (Toruń State Archives, Kat. II, Abteil. 3, Acta 1, pp. 9, 10).

46. Hans Maercker, *Geschichte der ländlichen Ortschaften und der drei Kleineren Städte det Kreises Thorn* (Danzig, 1899 -1900), pp. 224-228.

47. Ibid., p. 402.

48. Hamburg Staatsarchiv, "Mennonitengemeinde, 203, Bd. II, Briefwechsel."

49. "Man sehnte sich nach der Freiheit, die man unter früheren polnischen Regierung gehabt hatte," Erich L. Ratzlaff, *Im Weichselbogen* (Winnipeg, 1971), p. 121.

50. The Elbląg-Ostroda Canal allows boats to proceed from Elbląg south to Ostroda. Boats are transported over land passage by means of wagon platforms pulled along rails.

51. J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, *Archiefstukken,* II, 378-379.

52. Erich Randt, *Die Mennoniten in Ostpreussen.* Königsberg, 1912, 18.

53. *Mennonitische Lexikon*, II, 538-39; Horst Penner, *Ost- und Westpreussischen Mennoniten*, II, 67;W. Mannhardt.

54. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, III, p. 375.

55. Harder, Carl. *Monatsschrift*.

56. Peter Bachmann, *Mennoniten in Kleinpolen*, p. 165.

57. See, for example, the Bergthold collection of documents in the Fresno Pacific University Library archives.

58. See the very informative account of a visit to these places as reported by Roland and Eleanor Bergthold, "Bergthold Family Research – Ukraine," in Bergthold Family History: Discovery Trips, 2000 (pp.11-20). See also Glen Linscheid, "Mennonites from Galicia, Kleinpolen)," *Mennonite Historian*, September 1993, 1-2; Patricia Ross Huben Myren and Nina Ross Myren Schroepfer, *Radicals to Realists*, (Mount Dora, Florida, 1993).

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